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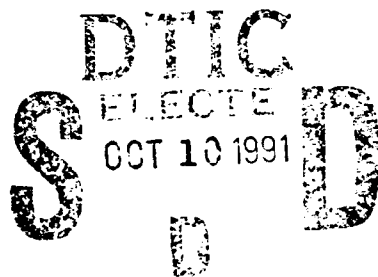


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FACT OR FICTION? COLONEL JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN AT  
GETTYSBURG AS DEPICTED IN MICHAEL SHAARA'S,  
THE KILLER ANGELS

A thesis presented to the faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE



by

George A. Latham II, MAJ, USA  
B.A., Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont, 1978.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1991

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of candidate: MAJ George A. Latham II

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

FACT OR FICTION? COLONEL JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN AT GETTYSBURG AS DEPICTED IN MICHAEL SHAARA'S THE KILLER ANGELS. A historical analysis of Colonel Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Infantry, and their action at the Battle of Gettysburg on 2 July 1863 in comparison with the novel The Killer Angels, by Major George A. Latham II, USA, 143 Pages.

This study analyses Michael Shaara's portrayal of the Battle of Gettysburg from the Northern perspective. It briefly describes how the U.S. Army uses the novel The Killer Angels formally and informally to conduct leadership training and to study the Battle of Gettysburg. Michael Shaara's career and background as an author as well as how he researched and wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning novel are described. The strategy of the Northern and Southern senior leadership resulting in the Battle of Gettysburg is analyzed. The background of the 20th Maine and its colonel are studied for their significance in the outcome of the battle. A comparison of events leading to Gettysburg as well as the actual fight on 2 July 1863 for the Little Round Top is conducted to portray historical inaccuracies and to reinforce accuracies. Events as they relate to Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's character, leadership and actions are the focus for the thesis' analysis. The study develops an analysis useful to supplement The Killer Angels in Army leadership instruction.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of General Joshua L. Chamberlain, the Twentieth Maine Infantry Regiment and Michael Shaara. To General Chamberlain and the Twentieth Maine for their sacrifice in the preservation of our country. To Michael Shaara for providing the officer corps with a work to make us realize our immense responsibility.

Mike, Tom and Dan thanks. Jim and Linda I appreciate all the help and encouragement. Tina, the additional burdens you assumed in the partnership, made this happen.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an historical analysis of Michael Shaara's novel The Killer Angels as it pertains to the portrayal of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, his Twentieth Maine Infantry Regiment, and their actions at the Battle of Gettysburg on 2 July 1863. Colonel Chamberlain and his Regiment's actions at the Little Round Top on 2 July 1863 were decisive by ensuring the Army of the Potomac's left flank was not enveloped. The holding of the Union left by the 20th Maine significantly reduced any possibility of the Confederates defeating the Northern forces at Gettysburg. The successful turning of the Union left may not only have assisted in defeating the Army of the Potomac, but also could have significantly changed the outcome of the Civil War.

This thesis is a combination of historical review and analysis pertaining to the events Michael Shaara depicts in The Killer Angels. The thesis describes the Northern and Southern Armies' disposition and strategy during the winter and spring of 1863, and how this brought them to the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

It outlines the criticality of the Union left from a strategic and tactical perspective. It also examines the background, education, and personality of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, the 20th Maine's commander. The thesis describes the formation, training and experience of the 20th Maine Regiment and its colonel leading up to Gettysburg. This description is analyzed for its significance as an essential ingredient for the unit's success at the Little Round Top.

The thesis then uses Michael Shaara's depiction of events in three parts. Events are analyzed for historical accuracy and their significance as the 20th Maine Regiment receives mutineers from the 2nd Maine Regiment and events that occur as the soldiers march toward Gettysburg. The occupation and positioning of the 20th Maine Regiment at the Little Round Top is studied, as well as an analysis of the actual fight to defend the high ground and defeat the 15th Alabama Regiment. Finally, the repositioning of the 20th Maine to the left rear of the Union line's center is discussed.

The thesis' significance originates from the U.S. Army's use of the novel The Killer Angels to study leadership and the battle of Gettysburg. The novel is used formally and informally as a tool for officer professional development. At an informal level, commanders in the field use the book as an instrument to start officers in a

professional reading program. Though not part of the program of instruction, some faculty members at the Combined Arms Services Staff School (CAS<sup>3</sup>) have used the book informally to discuss leadership via the novel's characters. Analysis of the novel regarding ethics and values, as well as enticing the CAS<sup>3</sup> students to begin a professional military reading program, have been the objectives for officers reading Michael Shaara's book.<sup>1</sup>

At a formal level, the book is listed by the U.S. Army Cadet Command on their reading list for military students in the third and fourth years of college. The universities that do use the book apply its contents to a number of tasks outlined in Soldier Training Publication 145-1-MQS, Military Qualification Standards Manual (Precommissioning Requirements).<sup>2</sup> These tasks range from leadership scenarios to the requirement for planning a conference. The book is used in the TRADOC schools system for officer development. At the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, The Killer Angels is part of the officers Phase II program of instruction combined with a staff ride to the Gettysburg battlefield.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the Command and General Staff College's leadership department uses the work to expand on a senior level leadership seminar among the students.<sup>4</sup> This seminar appears to be the highlight of the course drawing the most class participation.

With the wide spread use of Michael Shaara's novel in the Army's field units and school systems, putting the book in the proper perspective is essential to utilize it to its maximum effectiveness. For instructors to properly develop a leadership discussion using The Killer Angels, they must know what is accurate in order to further develop their objectives or to emphasize or deemphasize an event for training purposes. To utilize the book at face value would do an injustice to students being trained, as well as to the actual historical personages. The continued use of The Killer Angels, by various leadership directorates in conjunction with the background and analysis outlined in this thesis, will allow an instructor to expand his course of instruction. The information contained in this thesis permits the instructor to apply additional leadership points in their discussions and seminars. By expanding on the events outlined in the Pulitzer Prize winning novel, The Killer Angels, the content and quality of instruction could be improved on, benefiting the Army Officer Professional Development Program.

The author researched Michael Shaara, his background, previous novels, and methodology for researching and writing The Killer Angels. Secondary sources, followed by primary sources, were then reviewed focusing initially on the campaign and Battle of Gettysburg. The actual events from 23 May 1863 to 4 July 1863 regarding Colonel Joshua

Chamberlain, his regiment, and the defense of the Little Round Top were researched last, and continually analyzed in comparison to Michael Shaara's novel, thus forming the basis for this thesis.

Sources for researching Michael Shaara were few, and limited to primarily newspapers and magazines. The Dictionary of Literary Biography gave the best background on Michael Shaara. It also presented his research of The Killer Angels and the novel's content. The New York Times and Atlanta Monthly were useful in regards to book reviews, with minor discussion on the author, Michael Shaara. A former student of Michael Shaara wrote an article titled "Lest We Forget" in Civil War Magazine, that talked about him as a professor and mentor.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Shaara was an author of three novels, a screen-play, and over seventy five short stories. He was known as a slow, careful writer with diversified interests. His works cover science fiction, medical journalism, and history. His colleagues and students claimed that he wrote for the pleasure of telling a story well, rather than for money or to entertain a large audience.<sup>6</sup>

Shaara's background is a diversified combination of study and adventure. He was born June 23, 1929 in Jersey City, New Jersey, the son of an Italian immigrant father and mother who claimed historical ties to "Light-Horse Harry" Lee and the South. His parentage allowed him to experience

two societies as he claimed in a 1974 interview: "I've lived half and half, two different worlds. Both worlds are gone today. The loss of the South is like a fantasy that disappeared."<sup>7</sup> Though speculation on the thesis author's part, this background may have had some influence in choosing the crucial battle of Gettysburg to write about due to its effect on the outcome of the war.

Michael Shaara was a high school standout; yearbook editor, President of his class and the school choir, as well as a star athlete. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Rutgers University in 1951 and conducted advance study at the Universities of Vermont and Columbia. He never did receive an advanced degree. Michael Shaara served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's, 82nd Airborne Division from 1946 to 1948. From 1948-1949 he was a merchant seaman. In 1954 he joined the St. Petersburg, Florida police department and worked there until 1956. Throughout the late forties and early fifties, Michael Shaara also partook in boxing, winning seventeen of eighteen amateur prize fights. From 1955 until 1961 he worked as a short story writer and from 1961 until 1973 he was an associate professor of English at Florida State University.<sup>8</sup>

His years of writing and lecturing earned Michael Shaara numerous awards and recognition. In 1966, the American Medical Association recognized him for the article

"In the Midst of Life." He received Dikty's best science fiction award for a short story. However, Michael Shaara is famous for the writing of the novel The Killer Angels which earned him the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1975.<sup>9</sup>

When reading The Killer Angels, it is apparent that Michael Shaara emphasized the importance of terrain on the battlefield. Numerous descriptions, especially at the Little Round Top, support this. Michael Shaara made numerous trips to the battlefield. He not only used maps from secondary sources, but walked the battlefield repeatedly and surveyed the site in his own private airplane.<sup>10</sup>

In regards to Michael Shaara's research of the events, he states in his preface of The Killer Angels: "I have avoided historical opinions and have gone back primarily to the words of the men themselves, their letters and other documents."<sup>11</sup> This is true; however, secondary sources have also been utilized extensively. The events outlined in The Killer Angels regarding Joshua Chamberlain, after being compared and analyzed, show that John Pullen's, The Twentieth Maine and Willard Wallace's, Soul of the Lion may have been used extensively by Michael Shaara. I believe Colonel Chamberlain's article "Through Blood and Fire at Gettysburg" from the Hearst Magazine of 1913 is one of his primary sources. Regarding the Southern depiction, the



author believes that General Longstreet's book from Manassas to Appomattox is his primary source.<sup>12</sup>

After researching Michael Shaara, the author worked in reverse sequence by first going to secondary, then primary sources. In researching the overall strategy of the North and the South, Herman Hattaway's, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War provided a concise overview of events, by outlining those circumstances that forced General Meade and Lee to make certain decisions.<sup>13</sup> Edwin Coddington's, The Gettysburg Campaign was the main work used to understand what transpired on the battlefield on both sides. This was a very readable book that went to the lowest level of operational and tactical detail.<sup>14</sup>

John J. Pullen's, The Twentieth Maine was the principle source used to reconstruct the unit's and its colonel's training and experiences prior to arriving at Gettysburg. This is a detailed regimental history that was constructed from various officer's and men's letters and memoirs while assigned to the 20th Maine. It was the best source I found in researching the 20th Maine Regiment from its activation to its deactivation.<sup>15</sup>

Willard Wallace's The Soul of the Lion gave the most detailed and accurate account of Joshua Chamberlain's youth, years of study and education, as well as his thoughts during the war. Mr. Wallace used numerous letters written between Joshua Chamberlain, and his wife Fanny, as well as other

family members to construct the book. This research resulted in the first and only book written solely about Colonel Chamberlain, and included his years as Bowdoin College President and Governor of Maine.<sup>16</sup>

Warren Hassler's Commanders of the Army of the Potomac<sup>17</sup> and his article on General Meade in America Military Leaders<sup>18</sup> edited by Roger Spiller, are concise but detailed biographies of various leaders during the Civil War. These works were critical in understanding the command relationships, personalities, and actions of various commanders addressed in The Killer Angels.

In researching the significance of the Union left flank in relation to the Confederate perspective, General Lee's and Longstreet's words and thoughts were analyzed. The Memoirs of Robert E. Lee, written by his former Military Secretary A.L. Long were used. A.L. Long was present during most meetings between Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg and they portrayed a first-hand picture.<sup>19</sup> From Manassas to Appomattox, are General Longstreet's memoirs and were used to also gain the Southern perspective of the battle, specifically the Little Round Top.<sup>20</sup>

Numerous works were reviewed in researching events at the battle for the Little Round Top. Henry Pfanz's, Gettysburg, The Second Day was the most detailed secondary source account of the fight. This book outlined both the Northern and Southern perspective and went as low as company

level action in places.<sup>21</sup> Colonel Chamberlain's battle report of July 6, 1863, as well as the brigade and corps commanders account from the Official Records of the Civil War, were critical in establishing a complete recording of the battle. Colonel Chamberlain's report, more detailed than most battle reports contained in the records, included his unit's actions, as well as its significance in relation to adjacent units at the Round Top. The War of the Rebellion was also useful in establishing Union strategy. The correspondence between General Meade and Halleck clearly outlined the significance of the Union left flank.<sup>22</sup> Letters from Colonel Chamberlain to his family, as well as his inaugural address as President of Bowdoin College, were essential in understanding his personality and character. These were useful in analyzing his success as a military leader.<sup>23</sup>

The goal of this thesis is to present The Killer Angels in its proper historical perspective in order to expand the use of the work in the Army's Officer Professional Development Program. The thesis attempts to expose additional leadership factors and events that would be useful to improve instruction already occurring using The Killer Angels as the reference.

The relevance of the thesis is that in order to use a novel to instruct factual subject matter, the instructor must know what is accurate about the book in order to

preclude giving false impressions and information. In addition to accurate reporting of facts, history must be viewed with respect to all the factors which may have influenced the outcome of events.

The information and analysis contained in this thesis is designed to be historically accurate and useful. The thesis is not designed to discredit the novel, The Killer Angels or its author Michael Shaara. Neither is it designed to discredit any character discussed in the thesis. Initially the author was skeptical of Michael Shaara's portrayal of events and the greatness of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain. The research conducted has convinced the author that Michael Shaara is a superb writer and Joshua Chamberlain a great tactical commander.

## ENDNOTES

1. Interview with LTC James Williams, Combined Arms Service and Staff School Instructor, 16 Apr 91, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

LTC Williams indicated that informally as it is not a requirement from the schools program of instruction he requires his student captains (O-3) to read a book, present a report and orient part of the discussion on a leadership issue. The Killer Angels is one of the books utilized in the seminars and it is used to discuss ethics and values. The purpose of the reading and reporting according to LTC Williams is:

a. Introduce and reinforce the career long practice of increasing knowledge through reading books relevant to the military profession.

b. Acquaint the officer with a selection of books on military topics.

c. Give the officer practice on communicative skills.

2. Interview with CPT (P) Von Plinsky, Assistant Professor of Military Science, Military Students III & IV, University of Florida, 11 Apr 91, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

CPT Von Plinsky indicated that the U.S. Army Cadet Command HQ's at Ft. Monroe, Virginia, publishes a professional reading list for cadets. The Killer Angels is a recommended book, with the majority of universities using the work according to CPT Von Plinsky. At the University of Florida The Killer Angels is used with STP 145-I-MQS Military Qualification Standards I Manual, (Precommissioning Requirements) Sept 1986. The following tasks are trained:

a. Leadership: Plan meetings and conferences.

b. Written and oral communication tasks: Draft and edit military correspondence

c. Professional knowledge overview: Leadership and U.S. Military History.

3. Interview with MAJ James Boyd, Battalion Executive Officer, 1st BN. U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center & School. Telecon, 19 Apr 91.

MAJ Boyd conveyed to the author that the Phase II portion of the Special Forces Officer Qualification Course uses The Killer Angels to prepare the officers for a staff

ride that is conducted each class cycle to Gettysburg. It is used to give an overview of the battle so the officers are familiar with the battlefield when the tour is conducted.

4. Interview with LTC Terry Morrison, Chief Instructor, Center for Army Leadership, Command and General Staff College, 19 Apr 91, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

The leadership department at CGSC uses The Killer Angels as required reading to prepare students for a leadership seminar conducted in a sixteen person group during the instruction. The following requirements are discussed:

From the novel The Killer Angels, examine the actions of Generals Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, Richard Ewell, Ambrose P. Hill, J.E.B. Stuart, John Buford, George C. Meade and Colonel Joshua Chamberlain.

a. What did they do that led to ultimate success or failure.

b. How do their actions relate to senior level leadership doctrine as delineated in FM 22-103.

5. Walter W. Ross, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Detroit, Mich: Gale Research Company, 1978), Vol 83 pp. 305-310.

This work covers Michael Shaara's background as a youth and young man. The source outlines Michael Shaara's life as a writer and educator and discusses his previous novels.

New York Times, 10 May 1975. The newspaper article covers a review of The Killer Angels labeling the novel as providing "hypnotic fascination to laymen and historians alike."

Atlantic Monthly, April 1975. Calls Michael Shaara's Killer Angels a "brilliantly interpretive novel." The article concentrates on the novel's content and says nothing of Shaara's research.

David McMullen, "Lest We Forget." Civil War Magazine, Issue XXVI, November-December 1990.

Mr. McMullen was a former student of Michael Shaara and writes the article to remind the reader of his former professor's greatness. Mr. McMullen, talks of Mr. Shaara's devotion to writing and teaching. As Mr. McMullen states: when he received his copy of The Killer Angels from Michael Shaara he had inscribed in it, "when do I see yours?"

(Referring to the Pulitzer Prize.) The author outlines Michael Shaara's personality.

6. Books in Print (New York: R.R. Bowhen Company, 1990-91), Vol 3.

Of Michael Shaara's three novels other than The Killer Angels, The Herald, and Soldier Boy are still listed in Books in Print. His first novel The Broken Place is no longer in print. The book is about a Korean War hero turned prizefighter after the war. The Library Journal of 1 June 1981 lists the book as an impressive first novel but filled with too much war, love, travel, and boxing for a single work. Soldier Boy is listed as being a product of Michael Shaara's creative imagination and is highly recommended by The Library Journal. The Herald is a science fiction account of a pilot landing and experiencing life in an underpopulated world. The Library Journal states the telegraphic writing is an irritant but is off-set by a delicate love story. It is recommended reading.

7. Walter W. Ross, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1978), Vol 3 pp. 305-306.

8. Contemporary Authors, (Detroit, Mich 1980), Vol 102.

The author was not able to find the reason why Shaara never completed his advanced studies. In reviewing his background during the late forties and early fifties it is evidenced that he pursued an adventurous lifestyle. Though he completed his undergraduate work he may not have desired to fix himself to any further deskside study. Also, his move from job to job elude to a man who was unsettled and not sure of his desired future. Not attaining the advanced degree did not hinder Shaara. When the faculty at Florida State doubted his qualification for tenure at the school Shaara defended himself by saying "that the last four things I have written have been read by more people than everything the English faculty had written collectively." He kept his job.

9. Publishers Weekly, 8 July 1974. Presents numerous accolades about The Killer Angels stating "what many a historical novel lacks; believable personalities, accurate detail, genuine paths, which the re-creation of the Battle of Gettysburg willingly displays."

New York Times, 20 Oct 1974, lists The Killer Angels as the best among three books that are compared. Covers both good and bad points of the novel, a fair analysis.

10. Walter W. Ross, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Detroit, MI: The Gale Research Company, 1978) Vol 83, pg 308.

11. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Balantine Books, 1974) p. xiii.

12. In order for Michael Shaara to have constructed the events outside of the fight for the Little Round Top, it is the authors opinion he used John Pullen's The Twentieth Maine and Willard Wallace's, Soul of the Lion. The assimilation of the mutineers into the Regiment as well as the movement through Pennsylvania as depicted in The Killer Angels has a very similar tone as outlined in the above listed secondary sources. Joshua Chamberlain's article of 1913 through Blood and Fire at Gettysburg is a detailed account of the events just before and at the battle for the Round Top. It is told in very descriptive and flowery language. Some of Michael Shaara's portrayal of events parallels this. General Longstreet's memoirs, From Manassas to Appomattox, in the author's opinion were used to present the southern side of the battle. The descriptions outlined in Chapter I, The Spy and reference to Mr. Fremantle are the basis for this conclusion.

Arthur Fremantle's book Three Months in the Southern States was also used by Shaara. Mr McMullen eludes to its use in his article "Lest We Forget," Civil War Magazine.

13. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War, (Chicago, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1983) gives an indepth view of how the strategy and tactics employed in the war shaped the outcome of the battles. An excellent book to understand how various campaigns effected actions in other theatres of war.

14. Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study in Command (New York: Berne Convention, 1963) is a detailed narrative that covers events from General Lee's decision to move North from Virginia to his retreat from Pennsylvania. The book was useful both for its information and analysis.

15. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine; A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippencott Company, 1957) is listed in the August 1957, New York Herald Tribune by Bruce Catton as "one of the best Regimental histories for the entire war."

16. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960).



17. Warren W. Hassler Jr., Commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1962).

18. Roger J. Spiller, ed., American Military Leaders (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), Meade, George Gordon by Warren W. Hassler Jr.

19. A.L. Long, Memoirs of Robert E. Lee (New York: J.M. Stoddart and Company, 1886).

20. James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox (Secaucus, NY: Blue & Gray Press, 1988).

21. Henry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg the Second Day (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

22. The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990-1901), Series I Volume XXVII Part 1, pp. 71-72.

23. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain Papers (Brunswick, ME.: Bowdoin Library, 1852).

a. 30 Apr 1860 - Letter, Chamberlain to Cousin (Sara Farrington)

b. May 1863 - Letter, Chamberlain to daughter (Daisy)

c. Address of Governor Chamberlain to State of Maine, Jan 1867.

d. Joshua Chamberlain's Inaugural Address as President to Bowdoin College.

## CHAPTER II

### NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN STRATEGY OF THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

To understand the importance of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment's actions at the Little Round Top an analysis of the opposing armies' strategy during the Gettysburg Campaign is useful. The holding of the Union left flank and repulse of the Confederate attack at the Little Round Top by the 20th Maine are examples of a battlefield action that was tactically as well as operationally and strategically significant.<sup>1</sup>

In early June of 1863 the Southern army was positioned in the vicinity of Fredricksburg, Virginia resting and rearming after their recent victories. In the past five months they had successfully defeated the Army of the Potomac at Fredricksburg and Chancellorsville. These victories established a sound reputation of success for Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. General Lee's victories, especially the most recent at Chancellorsville, where he employed offensive tactics against a considerably larger Union force, encouraged him to renew another campaign.<sup>2</sup>

In devising his campaign strategy, General Lee took a number of matters into consideration. Though the Union had failed since the outbreak of the war to seize the Southern capital at Richmond, the future loss of the city was possible. Lee's present disposition along the Rappahannock River limited his flexibility, while it allowed General Hooker the freedom to posture Northern forces in a location along the York River to besiege Richmond.<sup>3</sup>

The ongoing war, having been conducted primarily in the Southern states had especially ravaged eastern and central Virginia. General Lee desired a campaign in a different location to relieve the Northern pressure facing the Virginian civilian populace. This would allow a season where crops and livestock could grow without being confiscated by elements of both armies.

General Grant's success against General Pemberton near Vicksburg concerned General Lee.<sup>4</sup> Vicksburg was the South's last stronghold controlling the Mississippi River, and President Jefferson Davis did not want to lose it. There was a need to either reinforce General Pemberton, or conduct a major offensive in the east to draw elements of Grant's Army from the lower Mississippi to relieve the pressure on Pemberton.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, General Lee desired a campaign that would result in recognition of the Southern cause by foreign governments. He also hoped to attack Northern national will

to establish some platform for negotiation and possibly a total abandonment of the war.<sup>6</sup>

A decisive battle on Northern soil would be the only way to incorporate all of General Lee's considerations into a campaign plan. Colonel Long, Lee's military secretary, suggested engaging General Hooker's Army of Potomac at Manassas. Lee responded to that suggestion saying:

No results of decisive value to the Confederate States could come from a victory in that locality. The Federal Army, if defeated, would fall back to the defenses of Washington, as on previous occasions, where it could reorganize in safety and again take the field in force.<sup>7</sup>

This statement by General Lee was crucial. He realized what strategy was needed to defeat the Army of the Potomac, yet not employing it in a timely manner increased his chances for failure at Gettysburg. General Lee had the opportunity to envelope the Northern forces and cut their lines of communication to Washington and position the Confederates between the Army of the Potomac and the capital. He did not initially attempt the envelopment. When he ultimately decided to act, his plan was countered by Colonel Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment.

General Lee chose to attack north through Maryland and into Pennsylvania.<sup>8</sup> By conducting the campaign in Pennsylvania, General Lee was confident the Army of the Potomac would move after him and relieve pressure on Richmond and ultimately Virginia. His planned defeat of the

Union forces would result in their retreat in an unorganized manner across the Susquehanna River. This would give Lee control of Maryland, Western Pennsylvania and parts of West Virginia. He additionally planned for the fall of Washington. This would result in the recognition of the Southern cause and devastate Northern national will as the Federal government would be forced to flee the capital. Finally, he felt this major action would be a diversion for the western theater of operation that was on the decline.<sup>9</sup>

General Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania had two additional advantages at the operational level which circumstances in the Southern states did not provide. The time of year and terrain in the Cumberland Valley allowed for plentiful foodstuffs that could be requisitioned by his army. This advantage allowed General Lee not to be tied to his lines of communications as he was in the south, and gave him the opportunity to fight a defensive fight at those locations of his own choosing. In prior engagements he had to consider his rail lines and wagon trains. In Pennsylvania he determined the speed of his men's marching and flexibility of battlefield selection would give him great advantages over the Union forces and ensure success. He violated this strategy at Gettysburg by engaging in offensive operations at a location he did not choose.

The Army of the Potomac in June of 1863 was positioned in the vicinity of the Rappahannock River, at an

encampment northeast of Fredricksburg. The Army had just suffered an unexpected defeat on 1 May 1863 at Chancellorsville and had assumed a defensive position to recover from the fight while the leadership planned their future strategy.<sup>10</sup>

Before Chancellorsville, the Army was a reorganized, rested and motivated unit, fully confident that they could defeat the Southern forces. After the defeat of the Army of the Potomac at Fredricksburg in December 1862, the Commander, Ambrose E. Burnside, was relieved and replaced by Major General Joseph J. Hooker. General Hooker immediately established a winter encampment, where he oriented the Army's efforts on sanitary and diet improvement. Poor nutrition and disease had plagued the Army since the outset of the war in 1861 and Hooker's first priority was to solve this problem. The appointment of Dr. Jonathan Letterman as the Army's medical director ensured success for the program that continued throughout the war.<sup>11</sup>

General Hooker implemented unit insignias at corps level to establish a sense of pride and esprit de corps among the soldiers. This program enhanced morale and reduced the numbers of soldiers who dropped out of the various foot marches. In the past, soldiers who fell out of marches could not be identified with a specific unit and when asked many of them lied about which command they were assigned. As each soldier now wore a specific unit

identifier, he could be brought to the responsible commander and held accountable. This significantly reduced the fall-outs and increased morale.<sup>12</sup>

General Hooker also instituted a leave program that reduced the desertion rate drastically. The soldiers knew they could receive a periodic visit home which increased morale and reduced the atmosphere for desertion. Additionally, Hooker reinstituted the corps as a unit of organization, which replaced the Grand Division and streamlined the chain of command.

Overall, the Army of the Potomac was a totally re-organized, well trained fighting unit when they engaged the Confederates at Chancellorsville. Their failure has been credited to their leader who may have been a great administrator but not a battlefield commander. The Northern officers and men saw themselves retreating at Chancellorsville for no apparent reason.<sup>13</sup> As a result General Hooker lost all credibility and the men lost confidence in him.<sup>14</sup> The Army of the Potomac in June 1863, was a solid disciplined and trained unit that required sound leadership at the highest level. The army's disposition at the unit level as stated by Colonel Fairchild of the 2nd Wisconsin was sound:

What an unfortunate set of fellows we are, there is no better disciplined, better equipped better behaved Army in the world and when it has a fair fight you will hear a good count of it.<sup>15</sup>

However, the lack of sound higher leadership left the army in a state of turmoil in June of 1863.

Following his defeat at Chancellorsville, General Hooker's strategy as coordinated with President Lincoln, was to accept a stalemate in Virginia and support General Grant at Vicksburg in the Western Theatre of War. When General Lee finally began his Army's movement north in early June, the Union leadership merely reacted. They had no specific plan to counter this unexpected move by the Confederacy.

President Lincoln did see General Lee's movement as a great opportunity when he wrote General Hooker saying:

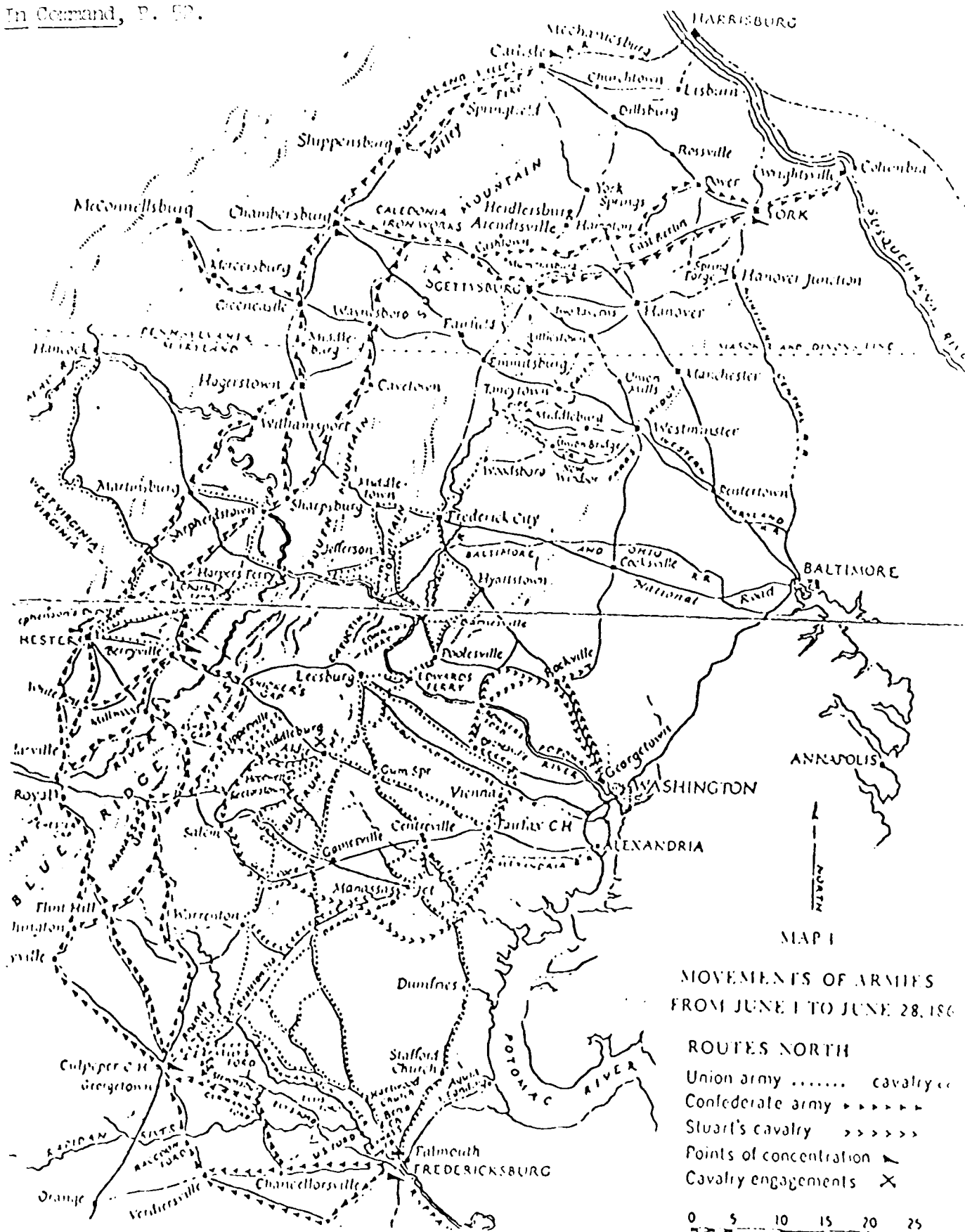
I believe you are aware that since you took command of the Army I have not believed that you had any chance to effect anything until now.<sup>16</sup>

President Lincoln and General Halleck saw the opportunity to defeat the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>17</sup> They foresaw an offensive fight designed to engage the flanks and rear of General Lee's Army, at the times and places chosen by General Hooker. President Lincoln suggested to General Hooker, to follow on Lee's flank, and on his inside track, shortening your lines, whilst he lengthens his.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, the Northern high command planned to exert pressure on the Southern capital of Richmond by directing elements of General Dix's force from Ft. Monroe to lay siege on Richmond. Raids were also conducted against the Southern lines of communication. Union raiders from West Virginia cut the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad,



Map From: Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study In Command, P. 52.



and in North Carolina General Foster struck with his cavalry against the critical railroads connecting Richmond with the lower south.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to President Lincoln's suggestions, General Hooker continued with a conservative, defensive strategy that allowed the Army of Northern Virginia to move virtually unopposed north. The failure of General Hooker to engage in offensive operations further solidified President Lincoln's lack of confidence in him. Hooker's action also adversely influenced Northern popular support. The populace through reports of the news media began to doubt the Union Army's capability to fight. President Lincoln finally replaced Hooker with General Meade on 27 June 1863.<sup>20</sup>

The appointment of General Meade as commander of the Army of the Potomac restored confidence of the officers and men regarding their senior leadership. General Meade's personality and experience also ensured that he would enforce the President's recommended strategy.<sup>21</sup> In conjunction with the President's strategy General Meade had his own plans that would ultimately counter General Lee's desire for a decisive defeat of the Northern army and the fall of Washington. General Meade outlined his objective of the campaign in a dispatch on June 29, 1863 to General Halleck:

Upon assuming command of the army, and after carefully considering the position of affairs and the movements of the enemy, I have concluded as follows: If Lee is moving for Baltimore, I expect

to get between his main army and that place. If he is crossing the Susquehanna, I shall rely upon General Couch, with his force, holding him until I can fall upon his rear and give him battle, which I shall endeavor to do. I have ordered the abandonment of Harper's Ferry, a detachment of not more than 3,000 to proceed with the property, by canal, to Washington, and strengthen your forces there against any cavalry raid; the remainder to move up and join me. The line from Frederick to Baltimore by rail will necessarily be abandoned. While I move forward, I shall incline to the right, toward the Baltimore and Harrisburg road, to cover that, and draw supplies from there, if circumstances permit it, my main objective point being, of course, Lee's army, which I am satisfied has all passed on through Hagerstown toward Chambersburg. My endeavor will be in my movements to hold my force well together, with the hope of falling upon some portion of Lee's army in detail. The cavalry force between me and Washington, as soon as I can learn sufficiently of their movement to pursue and fight without wasting the necessary force by useless movements, will be engaged by my cavalry. My main point being to find and fight the enemy, I shall have to submit to the cavalry raid around me in some measure.<sup>22</sup>

General Halleck responded to Meade twice on 1 July 1863 emphasizing the left flank of the Army as critical:

1 July 1863 10:45 a.m.

The movements of the enemy yesterday indicate his intention to either turn your left, or to come himself by the South Mountain and occupy Cumberland Valley. Do not let him draw you too far to the east.

1 July 1863 9:15 p.m.

Yours of 12 m received. Your tactical arrangements for battle seem good, so far as I can judge from my knowledge of the character of the country; but in a strategic view are you not too far east, and may not Lee attempt to turn your left and cut you off from Frederick. Please give your full attention to this suggestion.<sup>23</sup>

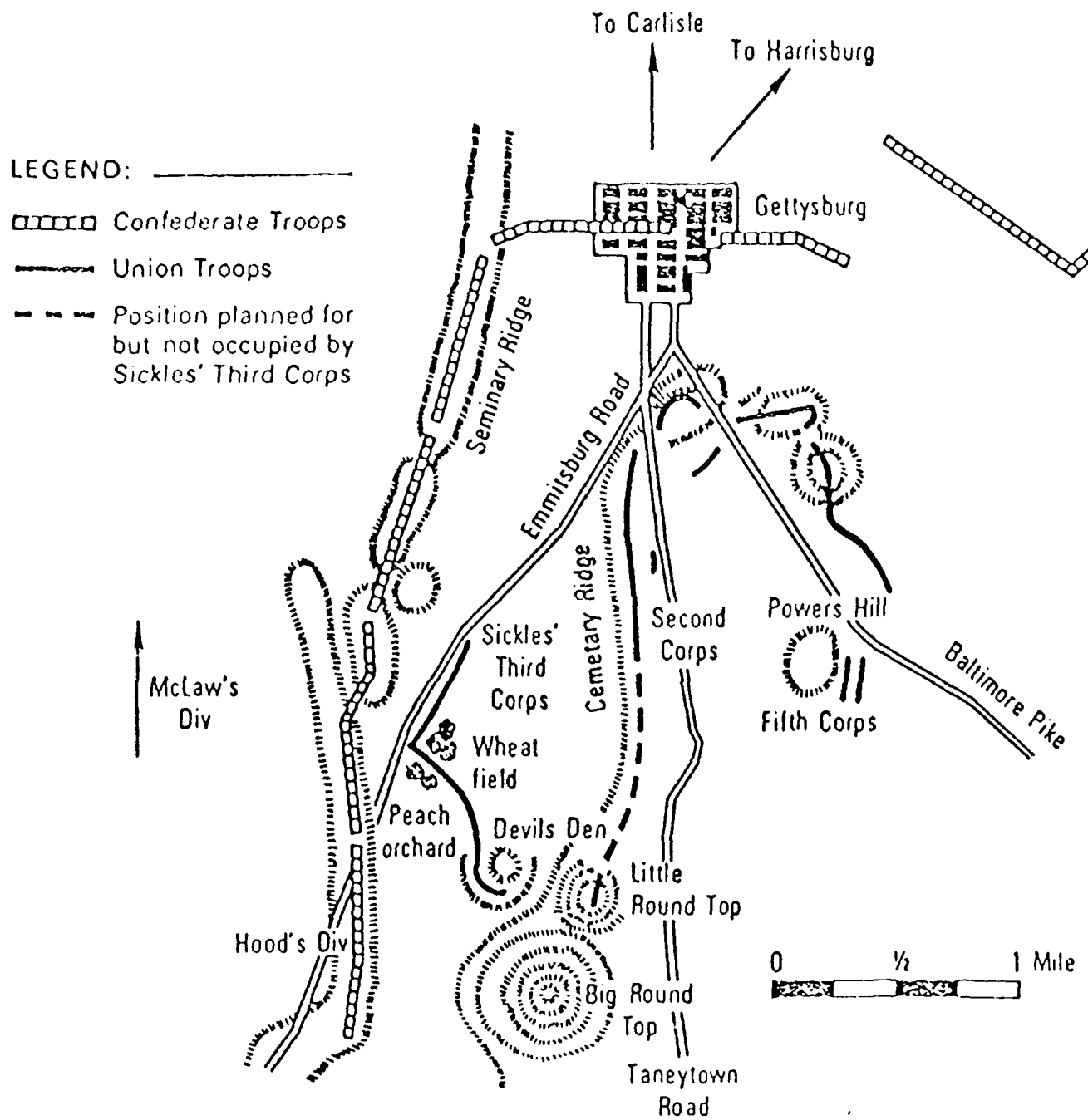
These dispatches by General Halleck surface the realization that strategically the Union left was the

critical flank to protect to counter the Confederate objectives. Thus, once the two armies did meet at Gettysburg the Union left continued to be the critical flank.

Both armies finally met at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. They moved on parallel columns stretching generally in a north to south direction. The town of Gettysburg was the northern most position of the armies. Upon meeting, General Lee's army ran easterly from Culps Hill, to the town of Gettysburg and south along Seminary Ridge for three miles. General Meade's position was along more favorable high ground opposing the Confederates. It was shaped as a fishhook with the point and curve at Culps Hill, the shaft moving southerly along Cemetery Ridge, ending at the two key hills, called the Round Tops. A valley a mile wide separated the two armies.<sup>24</sup>

Recognized for its strategic value by General Halleck and Meade, the Union left if enveloped during movement would allow the South to split the Army of the Potomac from Washington. This concept for defeat of the Northern army by separating it from the capital carried over to the static battlefield. As General Longstreet emphasized to General Lee on the evening of 1 July 1863, looking from Seminary Ridge he said:

"If we could have chosen a point to meet our plans of operations," he said, "I do not think we could have found a better one than that upon which they are now concentrating. All we have to do is to



Map from John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, p. 101.

Initial positions at Gettysburg, about 4 p.m. July 2, 1863.

throw our army around by their left, and we shall interpose between the Federal Army and Washington. We can get a strong position and wait, and if they fail to attack us we shall have everything in condition to move back tomorrow night in the direction of Washington, selecting beforehand a good position into which we can place our troops to receive battle the next day. Finding our object is Washington or that army, the Federals will be sure to attack us. When they attack, we shall beat them, as we proposed before we left Fredericksburg, and the probabilities are that the fruits of our success will be great."<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of the strategic implications, at the tactical level the flanking of the Union left would have allowed for the Confederate forces to defeat the Northern army in their defensive positions. Additionally, the North's flank was anchored by the Little Round Top.<sup>26</sup> The importance of the Little Round Top in addressing the Union battleline was emphasized by General Lee's aide de camp Colonel Long in 1886.

The Little Round Top was the keypoint of the whole section of the battlefield, and had Hood dreamed of its being unoccupied, pushed a force in that direction, and seized the commanding summit, the victory would have been in our grasp, since the possession of this point would not only have placed Sickles corps in a highly perilous position, but have enabled him to take the entire line in reverse.<sup>27</sup>

From the Union Army perspective, General Warren, the Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac (see Chapter 5) called the Little Round Top the "key of the whole position."<sup>28</sup> As stated in The Killer Angels, Michael Shaara does insure this point is emphasized. He depicts Colonel Vincent directing Colonel Chamberlain:

Vincent said, you are the extreme left of the Union line. You cannot withdraw. If you go, the

line is flanked. If you go they'll go right up the hilltop and take us in the rear.<sup>29</sup>

Michael Shaara's emphasis on the importance of Colonel Chamberlain's mission is critical, for the 20th Maine Regiment performed a task that not only saved their Brigade, but probably the routing of the Army of the Potomac. Additionally, the outcome of the Civil War could have been effected if the South was successful.

There are numerous accounts of the significance of the Little Round Top as it pertained to the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg. After analyzing many of these accounts a number of factors remain constant. The terrain can be considered key, for it's location in relation to the two armies was directly in the path of any attempt the South would make to flank the North. If occupied for observation the Round Top allowed a view that would assist in early warning against any approaching Confederate unit from the west or south. Reinforcements could then be allocated if time allowed and units were available. Additionally, the left edge of General Sickles' Corps (see Chapter 5) could be observed and supported if a main attack occurred there.

The position of the Little Round Top is directly behind the Big Round Top in relation to the direction the Southern army would flank. Its occupation by any Northern force would counter any attempt by the Southern army if they came over the Big Round Top. This presumption that

Confederate forces would move over the Round Tops to envelop the Northern left flank led General Warren to ensure northern forces occupied the high ground. As the forces did move east they would be met by defensive positions.

The Little Round Top provided the advantage of a position to be occupied by artillery. However, due to its size, and restrictive natural features only a small artillery element could possibly occupy the position. If occupied the artillery could provide effective fire for General Sickle's Corps, (left flank) however not enough to effect the entire Union front.

The artillery alone, placed upon the Little Round Top would merely provide harshing fires on the Union line. However, this same artillery fire, exploited by a well coordinated flanking maneuver of ground units, would create a different threat. This combination of arms could provide the combat power needed to take the battle line in reverse.

The classification of the Little Round Top as key terrain supports a defensive scenario rather than an offensive one. Ultimately, an offensive move by the Confederate forces that resulted in the taking of the Little Round Top would give a limited advantage for the emplacement of supporting fires. Additionally, in forming their attack to move north on General Sickle's flank the high ground would provide downhill movement adding momentum to the attack. However, the ground would have to be abandoned as the attack



continued, to exploit the Northern forces flank and rear. The same result could be obtained by moving completely around the Big Round Top, avoiding the high ground and paralleling the Taneytown Road. This movement however, would result in the attackers being over one-half mile to the rear of the Union battleline, not postured as advantageously to attack as if coming over the high ground. For the south to conduct a successful offensive operation the Little Round Top was advantageous but not key or decisive terrain for it could be bypassed and a wider envelopment conducted.

From the Northern perspective as recognized by General Warren, enforced by Colonel Vincent and emphasized by Michael Shaara the Little Round Top, the farthest point on the Union left was critical key terrain. The position gave the defender uninterrupted observation in all directions for early warning. Its occupation positioned the defender to counter any flanking maneuver from the west, south and east. The Little Round Top could be easily reinforced if forces were available. This high ground terrain provided the defender cover and the advantage of firing downhill, while the attacker had to avoid the rock obstacles, and attempt to maintain momentum while attacking uphill. As utilized by Colonel Chamberlain, its slope assisted his unit in gaining momentum when they did counter attack downhill on the 15th Alabama (see Chapter 5), significantly contributing to their success. This position

was key terrain essential to anchor the Union left while providing the most advantageous position to counter a flanking attempt by the South in this area of the battlefield.

The holding of the Union left flank was critical to ensure the Army of the Potomac's victory at Gettysburg. Though numerous arguments can be supported either way, (all out of speculation), ultimately the flanking of the Union left would have been a significant distractor to General Meade, as he fought his battle to the front and west. With General Sickles decisively engaged at 1600, 2 July 1863, reinforcements were prioritized to him. A sizeable attack by the Confederates from the south and west had a good chance of success. Michael Shaara's portrayal of the significance of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's and the 20th Maine Regiment's position and actions are accurate. Within the larger context not outlined in The Killer Angels, the holding of flank quite possibly precluded major charges in history regarding the outcome of the Civil War and the preservation of the Union.

## ENDNOTES

1. Ken Bandy, The Gettysburg Papers (Dayton, Ohio: Morning Side Bookshop, 1978), pp. 496-497.

Colonel Powell outlines the tactical and operational significance of the actions of the Little Round Top when he says in his History of the Fifth corps: "Historians have exhausted themselves in describing the actions at the 'Peach Orchard.' ...Great stress has been laid on the results of Pickett's charge ...but the truth of history is, that the little brigade of Vincent, with the self-sacrificing valor of the 20th Maine, under the gallant leadership of Joshua L. Chamberlain, fighting among the rocks and scrub-oaks in the vale between the Round Tops and July 2, 1863, saved to the Union arms the historic field of Gettysburg. Had they faltered for one instant, there would have been no grand charge of Pickett; and Gettysburg would have been the mausoleum of departed hopes for the National cause; for Longstreet would have enveloped Little Round Top, capturing all on its crest from the rear and held the key of the whole position."

H.J. Eckenrode, James Longstreet (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1936) pp. 185-186. On the evening of 1 July 1863, on the summit of Seminary Ridge, General Lee and Longstreet were observing the Union disposition of Forces when Longstreet addressed the strategic value of the Union left to General Lee as he said: "If we could have chosen a point to meet our plans of operations, I do not think we could have found a better one than that upon which they are now concentrating. All we have to do is to throw our army around by their left, and we shall interpose between the Federal Army and Washington. We can get a strong position and wait, and if they fail to attack us we shall have everything in condition to move back tomorrow night in the direction of Washington, selecting beforehand a good position into which we can place our troops to receive battle the next day. Finding our object is Washington or that army, the Federals will be sure to attack us. When they attack, we shall beat them, as we proposed before we left Fredericksburg, and the probabilities are that the fruits of our success will be great."

2. Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study In Command (New York: Scribners & Sons, 1963), p. 6.

In referring to the Army Northern Virginia's successes in 1863, Edwin Coddington states: "General Lee at once took steps to recondition and strengthen his army before the enemy could recover from his defeat. In spite of his heavy losses in general officers, including "Stonewall" Jackson,

Lee had gained many advantages, not the least of which were time and the freedom to maneuver. The Confederates had also gained psychologically, and their confidence in the military prowess of the Army of Northern Virginia under Lee soared to new heights. They had won two major battles, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, within a period of five months. Particularly impressive was the way in which they had beaten the Federal Army in the second engagement. At Fredericksburg they had fought defensively and allowed the enemy to exhaust himself in headlong attacks against a sunken road; at Chancellorsville with forces approximately half the size of those of the enemy they had wrestled the initiative from Hooker, gone on the offensive, and forced their opponents to give up the fight. If a fraction of the Army of Northern Virginia could accomplish so much, what could it not do once it had been refurbished and reinforced?

3. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 397.

Roger J. Spiller, ed., American Military Leaders (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), Hooker, Joseph by Warren W. Hassler Jr.

Joseph Hooker graduated from West Point in 1837. He served in the Second Seminole War, and along the Canadian Border. During the Mexican War he received three brevets for heroic conduct. Named commander of the Army of the Potomac in January 1863.

4. Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Gray (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), pp. 231-232.

John Clifford Pemberton graduated from West Point in 1837. Earned two brevets for gallantry in the Mexican War. He commanded for the south in the Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Earned the rank of lieutenant general on October 10, 1862 whereby he took command of the Department of Mississippi and Louisiana. Defeated at Vicksburg July 4, 1863.

5. Herman Hattaway, How The North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 396.

6. H.J. Echenrode, James Longstreet (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 174.

7. A.L. Long, Memoirs of Robert E. Lee (New York: J.M. Soddart and Company, 1886), p. 268.

8. Ibid., pp. 268.

Colonel Long described General Lee's selection of his campaign in Lee's Memoirs when he states: "In his view, the best course would be to invade Pennsylvania, penetrating this State in the direction of Chambersburg, York, or Gettysburg. He might be forced to give battle at one or the other of these places as circumstances might suggest, but, in his view, the vicinity of Gettysburg was much the best point, as it was less distant from his base on the Potomac, and was so situated that by holding the passes of the South Mountain he would be able to keep open his line of communication. York, being some twenty-five miles farther from the mountains, was a less desirable locality.

9. Ibid., pp. 268-269.

10. Edwin Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study in Command (New York: Scribner's & Sons, 1963), p. 34.

General Hooker claimed the Union had not been routed but the retreat across the river clearly indicated that he had been defeated. Lee had held the river line, but for a frightful cost. The Federals with some 133,868 men at Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg lost 1,606 killed, 9,762 wounded, and 5,919 missing for a total of 17,278 casualties between April 27 and May 11; but the Confederates with effectives estimated at 60,000 lost 1,665 killed, 9,081 wounded, and 2,018 missing from a total of 12,764 - a higher casualty percentage rate by far than the Federals suffered: 21 percent of the Confederates to 15 percent of the Federals.

11. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

Dr. Jonathan Letterman, assumed his position in July, 1862, and worked hard to improve conditions among the soldiers. Letterman appreciated the importance of preventive medicine, and he had gradually converted many of the army surgeons to his ideas. Hooker had great respect for Letterman's devotion to the welfare of the men, his professional knowledge, and administrative skill, and when he took command of the army he did all he could to support him in his work. As a result in May of 1863 Letterman drew up and put into effect certain rules and regulations for the promotion of sanitary conditions which were to become a model for other Union armies. Letterman's program succeeded in bringing about a general improvement in army health, while sharply reducing the number of cases of camp fever and the mortality rate of the sick and wounded.

In view of the agricultural wealth of the North it is startling to learn that many a Northern soldier suffered from a poor and unbalanced diet. While food was usually plentiful in supply, it was often of inferior quality, sometimes "nauseatingly bad," and of the wrong sort. There was too much emphasis upon salted meats and starches and not enough on vegetables, and frequently the rations were poorly cooked. As a result scurvy broke out in some units, especially when the men were on long and arduous campaigns.

12. Ibid., p. 28.

General Hooker adopted other important measures to maintain the well-being of the men and strengthen the army. In an effort to cut down straggling along the march and to develop within the soldier a feeling of pride and proprietary interest in a unit larger than his own regiment, Hooker in March assigned to each corps its own special insignia or identification mark, such as a star, a Greek cross, or a crescent. In each corps the badge of the first division was the corps insignia in red, the second in white, and the third in blue, and the soldier wore it on his fatigue cap. Armies in the West as well as the East soon heard about this system of identification and adopted it too. It had, Hooker afterwards asserted, a "magical" effect on the discipline and conduct of the troops, for the badges became "very precious" to them and remained so even after the war.

13. Ibid., pp. 28-31.

To Colonel (later General) Alexander S. Webb losing the battle was "incredible." He observed that "Fighting Joe lost himself very suddenly...and we...[retreated] without sufficient reason."

14. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

Of utmost concern to everyone was the lack of confidence in General Hooker. Once good will toward him had evaporated and he had fallen in the esteem of the army, the camp began to seethe with rumors, charges, and counter-charges. Under the circumstances many officers felt ready to give up and resign; others worked against the general to get rid of him. Some of the corps commanders conferred with Lincoln when he and General in Chief Henry W. Halleck suddenly appeared at Hooker's headquarters late on May 6, the day the army retreated across the Rappahannock. One of them, Major General Darius N. Couch, commander of the Second Corps, told the President that he would not serve any longer under Hooker. He went so far as to recommend Hooker's removal and Meade's appointment as commander of the Army. A few days later three of the corps commanders, Major Generals Couch,

Henry W. Slocum, and John Sedgwick, who were Meade's seniors in rank, sent him word that they were willing to serve under him.

After Lincoln's visit to the army there seemed to be a constant stream of general officers going to Washington either of their own volition or upon invitation. In most instances they went to discuss Hooker's shortcomings and advise as to who might take his place.

15. Ibid., p. 35.

16. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 399.

17. Roger J. Spiller, ed., American Military Leaders (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), Halleck, Henry Wagner by Russel F. Weigley.

Henry Wager Halleck, Army officer and military intellectual. Halleck served as General in Chief and Chief of Staff of the Union Armies during the Civil War.

18. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of The Civil War (Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 399.

19. Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana Sate University Press, 1981), pp. 125-126, 158-159.

John Adams Dix, served in U.S. Senate 1945, Secretary to the Treasury under James Buchanan. Commissioned a major general of volunteers on May 16, 1861. Was considered too old to serve in the field at 63, so performed varied garrison commands. Robert Sanford Foster mustered as a captain in Indiana in April 1861 was ultimately promoted to brigadier general in June 1863. Served in western theatre and in eastern theatre as brigade and division commander.

20. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 404.

With Lee's Army so far north Hooker's unimpressive responses exhausted the confidence of Lincoln. His credit had already long since run out with a number of newspaper editors. One of these had disgustedly written early in June, "Under the leadership of 'Fighting Joe Hooker' the glorious Army of the Potomac is becoming more slow in its movements, more unwieldly, less confident of itself, more of a football to the enemy, and less an honor to the country

than any army we have yet raised." On June 24 Hooker promised to send a corps or two across the Potomac to make Washington secure and then to strike on Lee's probable line of retreat. But then he asked for instructions, admitting, "I don't know whether I am standing on my head or feet."

On June 27, to Halleck's pleasure, Lincoln relieved Hooker and replaced him with the General in Chief's choice, Major General George Gordon Meade.

21. Roger J. Spiller, ed., America Military Leaders (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), Meade, George Gordon by Warren W. Hassler Jr.

Born on December 31, 1815 in Cadiz Spain, George Meade graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1835.

When the Civil War started in 1861, Meade was appointed brigadier general of volunteers and named to the command of one of the brigades in the famous Pennsylvania Reserves. In this capability he serviced in the Peninsula Campaign, led by George Brinton McClellan, in the spring and early summer of 1862. At Glendale Meade was severely wounded. But he returned in time to fight at Second Manassas in August under John Pope and, as a division commander, with McClellan at South Mountain and Antietam in September. In November Meade was promoted to major general of volunteers. At Fredericksburg in December he commanded a division under Ambrose Everett Burnside; Meade's troops temporarily broke through two Confederate defensive lines commanded by Thomas Jonathan ("Stonewall") Jackson. At Chancellorsville, under Joseph Hooker, in April-May 1863, he headed the V Corps, which was not heavily engaged. In all of these operations, Meade had performed most capably as a combat leader of reliability and sagacity.

With Robert Edward Lee launching his second invasion of the north in early June 1863, President Abraham Lincoln and General in Chief Henry Wager Halleck named Meade to succeed Hooker in command of the Army of the Potomac. He possessed three highly noteworthy capabilities: "He was a master of logistics"; he could tell, even if awakened suddenly at any hour, merely from the sound of firing what troops were engaged; and "he had an extraordinary eye to topography." Altogether he made a dull but very capable army commander.

22. The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901) Series 1, Volume, XXVII, Part 1, p. 523.

23. Ibid., p. 525.



24. Ken Bandy, The Gettysburg Papers (Dayton, Ohio: Morning Side Bookshop, 1978), p. 489.

25. H.J. Eckenrode, James Longstreet (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), pp. 186-187.

26. Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg, The Second Day (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 210-212.

Viewed from the west, Little Round Top can be described simplistically as having three elevations. The long north slope rises gradually about forty feet above the Wheatfield Road to a rock-faced shelf. This shelf, in turn, is at the base of another bluff of boulders that rises at the north end of the hill's crest. From this north end of the crest the surface rises gently over a distance of fifty yards to a knob near the center of the hill that forms its highest point. This knob, about 150 feet above the valley floor. It masks the south portion of the crest from the signal station area and in 1863 screened events that took place there from General Warren's view. From the knoll the crest's surface declines gently one hundred yards to the south, where it end in an abrupt slope and, to the front, another bouldered bluff. At the base of the rock ledge, ten or fifteen feet below the crest is another shelf, something of a counterpart of that at the north end of the hill. The shelf in all probability, was that first visited by Vincent and became the site of the right of his brigade's line.

Vincent saw that the slope to the right of the shelf fronted west toward the rear of the Third Corps position at Devil's Den. Therefore it seemed safe from attack. The south slope of the hill, that to the left of the shelf, in contrast, faced the saddle between Little Round Top and the long, tree-covered northwest slope of Round Top. Little Round Top's spur, further to the left, was opposite Round Top's north slope and crest. The saddle between the hills was covered with trees that would conceal any force with stamina enough to advance over the larger hill. Apart from a few sharpshooters, there were no Third Corps troops on Round Top - thus it was a dangerous area that Vincent's brigade would have to watch. The south slope of Little Round Top and the spur were essentially bare of trees, but they were studded with boulders large and small.

The end of the spur, to the left and rear of the hill, was the portion of Little Round Top closest to Round Top, and it dominated the saddle between the two hills. Because it rested behind the left of Little Round Top's crest, it stood in the path of any turning movement that the Confederates might make over Round Top against the Union

left. In addition, the Taneytown Road was only five hundred yards away. The spur tip, then, was the obvious place for the left of Vincent's brigade, for if his brigade did not occupy it, attackers could outflank any line that he might post on the hill. From the spur Vincent would string his line west around the hill as far as it would reach, hopefully far enough to cover the gap between the hillside position and the Third Corps left in the valley below, far enough to face the forbidding woods on Round Top's northwest slope.

27. A.L. Long, Memoirs of Robert E. Lee (New York: J.M. Stoddart and Company, 1886), p. 284.

28. Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg, The Second Day (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 205.

29. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballentine Books, 1974), p. 210.

### CHAPTER III

#### JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN AND THE 20TH MAINE REGIMENT

"Colonel Chamberlain, your gallantry was magnificent and your coolness and skill saved us."<sup>1</sup>

This statement by Colonel Rice, Commander, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 5th Corps at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 2, 1863 typifies Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's performance not only during the Battle of Gettysburg but throughout the Civil War. A former theological seminarian and college professor, Joshua Chamberlain responded to the events of the Civil War by requesting a commission in one of his home state's regiments, the 20th Maine. He assisted in their training and led them gallantly into battle. Joshua Chamberlain's abilities to lead and inspire his regiment, coupled with the hardiness and determination of the men from Maine, resulted in the 20th Maine Regiment's success at the Battle of Gettysburg. Colonel Chamberlain's actions at the Little Round Top earned him admiration from Northern and Southern commanders such as U.S. Grant and James Longstreet.<sup>2</sup>

Michael Shaara's portrayal of the Battle of Gettysburg in The Killer Angels from the Army of the Potomac's perspective is focused on the 20th Maine

Regiment. Joshua Chamberlain's actions and the significance of his regiment's holding of the Union left flank is also emphasized. Historians have credited Colonel Chamberlain's holding of his position as the critical event that thwarted the South's attempt to envelope the Union forces and defeat the defensive line in reverse. The Army of Northern Virginia's success at this maneuver could have resulted in the routing and defeat of the Union forces, possibly changing the entire outcome of this battle and the war. This success has labeled Colonel Chamberlain and his men hero's of the Battle for Little Round Top. The Battle of Gettysburg is considered the decisive military action in changing the tide of the war to favor the North.<sup>3</sup>

In studying the actions that occurred on Thursday, 2 July 1863 the second day at the Little Round Top, it is essential to understand Colonel Chamberlain and his regiment due to the important role they played in defeating the Southern attack. Though Michael Shaara portrays Colonel Chamberlain as the key figure responsible for success, there is important background information about the man and the 20th Maine Regiment, that significantly assisted in their victory.

Joshua Chamberlain's personality traits and leadership style were developed through a regimented family lifestyle and countless years in academic environments. He was born 8 September 1828, in Brewer, Maine to a family with

a history of military service. Joshua Chamberlain's great grandfather had served in the French and Indian War, and Revolutionary War. His grandfather had commanded the Eastport, Maine garrison. His father was a regimental commander of the militia and fought in the Aroostook War against New Brunswick in 1838. Thus, Joshua was raised in a family environment familiar with the military, its traditions and demands.<sup>4</sup>

Day to day life entailed specific chores on the family farm, and at times, work at his father's shipyard. Responsibility was delegated early to Chamberlain and continued throughout his youth, for at times he worked at a brickyard and ropewalk making fishlines to offset his father's lost income during family financial hardships.<sup>5</sup>

Joshua Chamberlain's formal schooling began at Major Whiting's Military Academy in Ellsworth, Maine in the early 1840's. Here he excelled in all subjects, ranging from military orientation to academics. Financial burdens continued to effect his family, resulting in Chamberlain again assisting in helping his father financially. This time however, he chose a vocation that he would cherish throughout his lifetime, that of teaching. Through his teaching experiences he learned early to appreciate the value of his vocation and realized the dedication and patience required to be successful at his work.<sup>6</sup>

In the mid 1840's Chamberlain dedicated himself to the church and the study of religion. He was active in church events, became a formal member of the congregation in Brewer, and assisted in various capacities with the chorus and church music. Additionally, he focused his study on religion, orienting on its social implications and spiritual message. This religious focus is a key factor in understanding Joshua Chamberlain, for this was a crossroads in his life where he established moral priorities. It is here that Chamberlain accepts religion and its importance spiritually, but he additionally realizes the social implications as well. Joshua Chamberlain advocated that the combination of religious spiritual functions and social laws were essential in allowing man to live in a civilized world.<sup>7</sup>

In the late 1840's, Joshua Chamberlain made the decision to become a minister. He desired an orientation toward a missionary vocation to teach school and preach the social and spiritual aspects of religion. His goal was to be a missionary in a foreign country. Conversely his father had continually pressured and influenced Chamberlain to attend West Point and pursue a military career. His decision made, Joshua Chamberlain chose the congregational ministry over the military. He applied and was accepted to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine in 1848.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his student years at Bowdoin (1848-1852), Chamberlain continued to display those personality traits and characteristics that would ensure his success throughout his life. Sterness, discipline, hard work, and dedication were his hallmarks and earned him a reputation as a brilliant scholar. While at Bowdoin, Chamberlain remained involved in the Church where he taught Sunday school and was a leader in the choir of a church just outside the campus. He graduated from Bowdoin in August 1852 where his selection to Phi Beta Kappa summarized his success. He was a member of various academic groups and fraternities where he rose above his peers being consistently selected to present various oral presentations at college functions. Chamberlain's leadership qualities consistently surfaced, thus identifying him as a charismatic leader, exceptional in relation to his peers.<sup>9</sup>

Upon graduation, Chamberlain entered the Bangor Theological Seminary where he completed his studies in 1855. During this time he earned his masters degree from Bowdoin.

His oration was entitled, "Law and Liberty"; he analyzed their historical development, and demonstrated that law without liberty is tyranny and liberty without law is irresponsible and chaotic.<sup>10</sup>

This fact is important for the reader to remember when studying Joshua Chamberlain, for it is the theory he follows when he personally condemns the South and decides to

participate in the Civil War. He condemns the South's actions as illegal regardless of their political desires to succeed from the Union.<sup>11</sup>

In 1855 Joshua Chamberlain returned to Bowdoin to teach logic and theology. The invitation to instruct came from the college faculty due to his superb Master's Thesis and his example as a scholar, during his undergraduate years. Chamberlain spent the next seven years at Bowdoin teaching and tutoring students as well as playing an active role in religious activities.

His various philosophies on life were demonstrated during these years where Professor Chamberlain advocates liberal study environments and curriculums. He lobbied for the reduction of regulations that directed the students academically and personally. His idea of education was one of broad study not oriented on any specific focus; study that would assist in how thought influences a person's life. This liberal philosophy resulted in Chamberlain being recognized as an original thinker and leader. This was not supported by his colleagues. As his service continued at Bowdoin, Chamberlain grew to be more dissatisfied with the educational environment, but none the less remained dedicated to it. His dissatisfaction was a result of his colleagues conservative approach to learning and their conviction not to change.<sup>12</sup>



The year 1861 and the events at the outset of the Civil War had little impact on the day to day life at Bowdoin College. In 1862 as the Union forces were being defeated, the seriousness of the countries situation began to be realized by the leaders and the people. Approximately 290 of Bowdoin's 1200 students voluntarily enlisted in 1862. The reality of war finally reached the countries most northeast state and with it some serious decision-making was to be made by Joshua Chamberlain; weather to stay and teach or join the war effort.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of Chamberlain entering the war was discouraged by the faculty and staff of the college. Professor Chamberlain's colleagues insisted that his duty was in education and that he had no qualifications to lead men in battle. His experience at Major Whiting's Military Academy was his only training and hardly a qualifier for the potential responsibility he might assume. To reinforce their position on the subject, the university staff offered Joshua Chamberlain a leave of absence to study in Europe. This offer was unheard of for a professor so early in his career and a once in a lifetime chance to further his career and label him as a hand picked scholar of advanced study. Initially, Professor Chamberlain accepted the leave of absence, but his dedication to moral issues and law as the basis for civilization overrode the offer and he decided to join the Union forces.<sup>14</sup>

Michael Shaara briefly touches on the event of the leave of absence in The Killer Angels, however the accuracy is questionable regarding the offer. Shaara advocates that Chamberlain requests the sabbatical because the university will not let him leave. Upon receiving the leave of absence, he instead goes to the Governor of Maine to request entry in the Army. Factually, his colleagues offered the leave of absence at no request, because they valued Chamberlain's work and presence at Bowdoin College. They feared the loss of this great scholar in war. Offering the sabbatical was designed to force Professor Chamberlain out of the country to concentrate on advance studies, in order to forget the crisis at hand.

In researching Joshua Chamberlain an action of questionable ethics as implied in The Killer Angels is doubtful. Joshua Chamberlain was a man of principle above all else. He had tentatively accepted his colleague's offer but after further contemplation, decided his original plans to fight against the rebels overrode any offers. The author has surfaced this as a minor historical inaccuracy to emphasize that the Bowdoin faculty valued Chamberlain's teachings immensely. As well as becoming a great military officer, he was first a great scholar and leader among his colleagues. Michael Shaara's point is inaccurate, however, it presents Joshua Chamberlain positively, as a man loyal to his country.

On July 2 and August 4, 1862, President Lincoln requested the raising of thirteen new regiments. With Joshua Chamberlain's background as an educator and leader it was not surprising for him to receive a commission when he offered his service to the Governor of Maine. Initially Chamberlain was offered a regimental command based on his status as a scholar, gentleman, and his moral position. He refused the position and requested a Lieutenant Colonels commission, so he could learn the military trade at the command level. On August 8, 1862 he was awarded a commission in the 20th Regiment Infantry, Maine Volunteers as a Lieutenant Colonel.<sup>15</sup>

In August 1862 Chamberlain's colleagues again protested his intention to join the Union forces to the Governor of Maine, Israel Washburn. Their reasoning for the protest was based on Chamberlain's inexperience. The shortage of volunteer officers overrode their protest, as the state Adjutant General needed every potentially qualified officer who applied. Joshua Chamberlain's convictions were such that neither his colleagues or family could ever have overrode his dedication to do what was right. The convictions demonstrated in the mid 1850's in his Master's Thesis were the pretense of Chamberlain's values. This statement will serve the reader to understand Chamberlain's convictions upon entering the Civil War:

He strongly disapproved of slavery on moral and religious grounds, but, if anything, he was more critical of succession as the abrogation of a government of laws which the southern states had originally pledged themselves to sustain. Neither concern for family nor compassion for life could prevail over the gradually mounting conviction that he must commit himself wholeheartedly to this struggle in which he saw the very citadel of civilization threatened, a respect for the laws of man and the laws of God.<sup>16</sup>

These statements summarize Chamberlain's virtues and principles. It is the South's breaking of an oath of allegiance that infuriated him. Their lack of respect for law as the factor that differentiates civilized man from animals. He feels obligated to partake in restoring law by joining the war effort. Joshua Chamberlain did finally leave his family and Bowdoin College in the summer of 1862. The next eleven months leading to the Battle of Gettysburg would be a critical time for Chamberlain as he applied his charismatic leadership abilities and dedication, to learning the art of warfare and command.

The molding of the 20th Maine Regiment through peacetime training and limited combat would additionally prove essential to the success of the unit at Gettysburg. The regiment's first commander, Colonel Albert Ames, ultimately ensured the 20th's officers (to include Joshua Chamberlain) and men would be ready to fight when the time came. Colonel Ames assumed command of the unit in August 1862 at Camp Mason, outside of Portland, Maine.<sup>17</sup>

Assembled for Colonel Ames was a cross section of New England farmers, fisherman, and woodsmen. This diverse make-up made the unit unique at the outset of training. The 20th was made of volunteers who committed themselves for three years. These volunteers did not enter by groups from certain towns and cities like most regiments in the Civil War, they enlisted as individuals.

Though some towns sent small groups, (squad sized elements), they were not sent off from their homes with a hero's departure as in other states. These were hardy individualists, physically strong due to a spartan life style and mentally independent due to secluded upbringings in remote geographic areas. This cross section of soldiers would create a formidable discipline problem for commanders, but once trained, they formed a strong, enthusiastic fighting force.<sup>18</sup>

Colonel Ames's formal education, recent war experience and leadership style of stern discipline were essential to form this gathering of individuals into a cohesive, well trained, infantry regiment. Ames was a graduate of the United States Military Academy, having completed his education in June 1861. Immediately upon commissioning, he participated in the First Battle of Bull Run in July of 1861, where he was wounded and awarded the Medal of Honor.<sup>19</sup> His experiences prior to assuming command of the 20th Maine Regiment resulted in a leader who's decision

making process mixed a common sense approach of theory learned in school with practical application learned in combat. He had learned that discipline was the basic ingredient needed for an infantry unit to be successful in war. It was Colonel Ame's unquestionable devotion to duty and combat experience, coupled with the character trait of disciplinarian, that attracted Joshua Chamberlain to learn from this officer who was ten years his junior. A true friendship developed over the next year, with Colonel Ames dedicating numerous hours to educating Chamberlain in those aspects of war learned from field manuals and practical experience.<sup>20</sup>.

As a newly mustered Regiment, the 20th needed intense training, however, the unit had advantages compared with other new regiments. It was made up of all volunteers, which was not an easy thing to do in the states that had experienced one year of war. Once the public was exposed to the horrors of war with dead and wounded returning home, volunteers were not as readily available in 1862 as in 1861. Additionally, most people felt the war would be a short one, ending in well under one year. Since this did not occur, the average person became skeptical of the war's unpredictable length and their subsequent participation. In line with these points the state of Maine had formed the 2nd and 7th Maine in 1861 further reducing prospective recruits.

The country style upbringing of the majority of the 20th's recruits proved to be a great advantage. The majority of the soldiers already knew how to use a rifle and had a basic understanding of outdoor survival techniques which are essential in the infantry.

Finally, the 20th Maine Regiment filled the table of organization that was prescribed by law. Colonel Ames had the numbers to fill a full Civil War volunteer regiment of ten companies, composed of sixty-four to eighty-two privates; thirteen non commissioned officers; a wagoneer; two musicians; a captain, and two lieutenants. He also had a lieutenant colonel (Joshua Chamberlain) as his deputy, a major, and a regimental staff. A full volunteer regiment was not normal at this stage in the war and was considered an obvious advantage due to the likeliness of future casualties.<sup>21</sup>

Upon its activation at Camp Mason, Maine in August of 1862 the 20th Maine Regiment was a closely knit group of 965 officers and men. Eighty-five percent were born in New England. All were volunteers, with the majority being hardy outdoorsmen. They were led by a proven war hero, himself originally from Maine.<sup>22</sup>

At Camp Mason, Colonel Ames focused the unit on equipment inventories, uniform and equipment issue, and drill. The drill was designed to establish initial unit cohesion and discipline. Additionally officers were

commissioned and the regiment was sworn to federal service on August 29, 1862. At the completion of administrative matters, the unit moved on September 3rd by rail to Boston and then by the ship Merrimac, to the theatre of war.<sup>23</sup>

The 20th Maine Regiment arrived in Washington, D.C. on 7 September 1862 where muskets and ammunition were issued and their first march conducted. The unit moved to Fort Craig where they became part of 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, Fifth Corps known as "Butterfield's Light Brigade" on 8 September 1862. This point is significant, for the average soldier during the Civil War normally focused on events at company and regimental level. However, the Butterfield Brigade had a family atmosphere and high morale established by Colonel Butterfield, which directed the soldiers loyalty to brigade level as well. When analyzing the mission given the 3rd Brigade and 20th Maine during the Battle of Gettysburg to defend the Little Round Top, this mindset had a significant effect on the soldiers and officers desires and motivation to succeed at all costs.

As portrayed throughout Sharra's book when the 20th Maine is referred to during a march or to break camp, it is noted that the men are constantly humming the words "Dan, Dan Butterfield." This comes from Colonel Butterfield who established an alert bugle call prior to the main bugle command to gain the units attention. The alert melody sounded like the words Dan, Dan Butterfield, according to



the soldiers. A soldier's commander, General Butterfield had established "esprit de corps" in the 3rd Brigade in which the 20th Maine became an integral part.<sup>24</sup>

On 12 September, five days after arriving in the theatre of war, the 20th Maine began a march to battle that would end at Antietam. The level of training was low. This was demonstrated on the first day's sixteen mile march when the regiment finished with only a squad sized element. The regiment reorganized that night, marched 24 miles the next day, and ended the movement with a contingent alot larger than the previous day. These marches were the unit's main training vehicle, and were used to establish unit cohesion, and discipline. They ultimately acclimatized the unit to the southern heat. At Antietam, the Fifth Corps was held in reserve at Middle Bridge where the men of the 20th were able to observe their first battle. The decision by General McClellan to hold the unit in reserve has received much criticism, yet factually the corps had not received enough training to make them useful on the battlefield.<sup>25</sup>

From Antietam, the Army of the Potomac and the 20th Maine pursued the rebel forces south to the Potomac River where the unit saw its first limited combat. On September 20th near Shephardstown, (the location that the southern army's main body of forces crossed the Potomac), the 20th continued the pursuit and received orders to move south across the river after the Confederates. As the regiment

crossed (on order of Colonel Ames), it was obvious that many other Northern forces were already retreating. Regardless, the 20th pressed on and reached the southern bank of the river where they met elements of a Confederate counter-attack. Retreat was inevitable, yet the regiment fell back in an organized manner. In the process approximately three men were wounded. The Confederates withdrew south at dark, leaving the 20th Maine with its first exposure to battle.<sup>26</sup>

The regiment's organized retreat under fire is significant for there were other units of the corps, such as the 118th Pennsylvania, who did not fall back in such an orderly fashion, and were routed. There are various reasons for this. Regardless, due to the 20th's instilled discipline and confident leadership, the unit fared well. Additionally, Joshua Chamberlain began the establishment of his reputation for "coolness under fire." During the withdrawal, Chamberlain halted his horse in the middle of the river and shouted words of encouragement to the men as they fell back. He succeeded in his mission, however, his horse was shot out from underneath him, whereby he waded to the north shore with the remaining soldiers.<sup>27</sup>

The 20th Maine was moved from Antietam to temporary pickett duty at Shepardstown Ford and then finally to a bivouac area near the mouth of the Antietam River in October 1862. This bivouac area, was what Colonel Ames had been

waiting for. It offered the time to train the regiment without distraction. The training was conducted against a background of discipline. Everything that was done emphasized nine count musket loading, and battlefield drill (predominantly at company and battalion level) to maneuver against an enemy force. The drill-book line of battle that oriented on riflemen in ranks of two was continuously emphasized by Colonel Ames. It focused on movements from the line into columns and back into the line. Casey's Infantry Tactics Manual was the document followed. Colonel Ames emphasis on drill was critical for insuring success of the 20th at the Little Round Top. The regiments ability to maneuver from the left flank on a right wheel without breaking ranks and maintaining solid momentum is one factor that was essential for their bayonet charge.

During the training camp Colonel Ames's stern discipline and training began to mold the Twentieth Maine into a solid military unit. The following statements from Tom Chamberlain, (Joshua's brother) depicts the development of the unit through the eyes of a Sergeant:

On October 14, 1862, describing the men's feelings toward Ames, Tom wrote to his sister, "I swear they will shoot him the first battle we are in." Writing again on the 26th of October, Tom noted that Ames was hated beyond all description and that Colonel Ames will take the men out to drill and he will d'm them up and down also expressing his own wish that Ames should either be put in state prison or promoted to brigadier general - anything to get him off the back of the regiment. But on October 30 in a letter to one of his brothers, Tom wrote a bit boastfully, Colonel

Ames drills us sergeants every day to see who's fit to promote. I tell you he is about a savage a man as you ever saw. I drill the company every day and do it up like an old soldier. I tell you we have to do it well or get a damming.<sup>28</sup>

Sergeant Chamberlain's words range from contempt for their commander to a feeling of accomplishment, pride, and "esprit de corps." Colonel Ames demanded the same standards of his junior officers ensuring discipline at all levels of the unit.<sup>29</sup>

During the training camp the development of the Deputy Commander, Joshua Chamberlain, was conducted. Nightly, Ames and Chamberlain studied together, discussing regimental tactics and the art of war.

In a letter to his wife, Fanny, on 26 October 1862, Chamberlain wrote:

I study I tell you every military work I can find and it is no small labor to master the evolution of a battalion and brigade. I am bound to understand everything. And I want you to send me my Jomini Art of War. The COL and I are going to read it.<sup>30</sup>

Within this structured training environment Colonel Joshua Chamberlain easily adapted to military life as observed by his brother who wrote his mother saying:

I wish you could hear Lawrence give off a command and see him ride along the battalion on his white horse. He looks splendidly.<sup>31</sup>

Joshua Chamberlain also reinforces this in his own words to his wife on October 26, 1862:

I have my care and vexations, but let me say no danger and no hardship ever makes me wish to get back to that college life again. I can't breathe

when I think of those last two years. Why I would spend my whole life in campaigning it, rather than endure that again. One thing though, I won't endure it again. My experience and the habit of command will make me less complaisant, will break in upon the notion that certain persons are the natural authorities over me.<sup>32</sup>

The training camp, located at the mouth of the Anteitam, (October and November of 1862) was essential in molding the 20th Maine and its deputy commander into a solid infantry regiment.

In November, the 20th Maine moved by foot south from their training camp to Warrenton, Virginia and then to Stoneman's Switch short of Fredricksburg, Virginia, arriving 6 December 1862. At Stoneman's Switch, the regiment established a camp and awaited orders from the new Army of the Potomac Commander, General Burnside. The orders came, moving Fifth corps across the Rappahannock River to Fredricksburg, Virginia.<sup>33</sup>

On 13 December 1862, the 20th took part in the major battle of Fredricksburg where the Confederate Army destroyed elements of the Army of the Potomac. It was late on the afternoon of the 13th of December when the 20th was committed. Both Colonel Ames and Chamberlain were at the lead of the regiment. Prior to the 20th's arrival, the units committed were destroyed prior to reaching the stonewall opposing the Confederate breast works. Upon commitment, the 20th Maine moved through the devastated units and ultimately, after receiving numerous casualties,

reached their objective of the ridge, near the stonewall. Here the unit spent the night, lying amidst the dead bodies, using the corpses clothing for warmth and cover. The next day, the 20th held off a Confederate counter-attack of three hundred men, where the soldiers of Maine laid low amongst the corpses using the dead bodies for breastworks. They spoiled the counterattack and subsequently withdrew back to Fredricksburg that night.<sup>34</sup>

Joshua Chamberlain described the withdrawal of his unit, which he noted was not good for the nerves:

We had to pick our way over a field strewn with incongruous ruin; men torn and broken and cut to pieces in every indescribable way, cannon dismounted, gun carriages smashed or overturned, ammunition chests flung wildly about, horses dead and half-dead still held in harness, accouterments of every sort scattered as by whirlwinds."<sup>35</sup>

Fredricksburg, though a defeat for the North, was the 20th Maine's first major engagement. Overall, the unit did very well. They advanced under fire and seized their objective. This action was another factor contributing to the development of the 20th Maine Regiment as a hardened, combat ready unit.<sup>36</sup>

From Fredricksburg, the 20th Maine moved back to Stoneman's Switch, where they were ordered to build permanent winter quarters. This was done by building four man log huts in an orderly military encampment. During the winter camp, Colonel Ames kept the regiment busy with drill

and picket guard as well as other tasks, such as wood cutting.

An expedition on the 20th of January 1863 to make contact with the rebels led to a demoralizing campaign in harsh weather without success. At the completion of this campaign, General Burnside was replaced by General Hooker. Hooker moved the Army of the Potomac back to the winter encampment where emphasis was placed on morale boosting through improved food and sanitation conditions. Drill and training continued for the 20th Maine Regiment. While in the winter camp, the regiment was vaccinated for smallpox on 17 April 1863. The vaccination resulted in eighty-four men acquiring the disease.<sup>37</sup>

Based on the Regiment's status as quarantined, the 20th Maine did not participate in the Battle of Chancellorsville with the rest of Fifth Corps on 5 and 6 May 1863. Instead, the regiment secured the telegraph lines from the battle area to General Hooker's Headquarters. Joshua Chamberlain however, managed to take part in the fight by assisting the 1st Division Commander of Fifth Corps where he could. He rallied elements of the unit against General Stuart and latter helped rally men of the Fifth Corps as they moved back across the Rappahannock on pontoon bridges that were ready to give way.<sup>38</sup>

When the fighting ended at Chancellorsville, Colonel Ames was selected for promotion to Brigade Commander in

Eleventh Corps. Additionally at the recommendation of Ames and General Griffin the (1st Division Commander), who observed Chamberlain assisting his unit, Joshua Chamberlain was recommended for promotion also. On 23 June 1863, LTC Joshua Chamberlain was promoted to full colonel in command of the Twentieth Maine Regiment, though he had factually commanded the unit since 20 May 1863.<sup>39</sup>

The next encounter for the 20th Maine under their newly promoted colonel was a grueling forced march north where they were to play a significant part in the Battle of Gettysburg.

The events previously outlined are determined by the author as relevant in understanding Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and his regiment preceding their actions at the Battle of Gettysburg. The understanding of Colonel Chamberlain's background and values as well as the 20th Maine Regiment's recruitment, training and combat experience prior to Gettysburg were essential as combat multipliers contributing to the unit's success at the Round Tops.

Colonel Chamberlain's upbringing in a home that demanded responsibility at an early age began the formulation of his character as a leader. The exposure to a military environment through his father and grandfather's examples as citizen soldiers also influenced Chamberlain's character. His father's insistence that anything can be



accomplished if you put your mind to it helped formulate Joshua Chamberlain's personality trait of dedication.

Colonel Chamberlain's formal education and time spent as a professor molded this man into a common-sense thinker that advocated discipline while demonstrating a genuine compassion for his fellow man. His education at Whiting's Military Academy and the Seminary assisted in emphasizing the importance of accomplishing tasks efficiently and successfully, for both schools demanded study and stern discipline. His studies of religion at the seminary and church as well as his normal subjects at Bowdoin emphasized the importance of society, its laws and guidelines in maintaining a civilized society. The violation of civilization's laws was the exact pretense that Joshua Chamberlain felt the South had violated when it seceded from the Union. His higher education for obtaining his master's degree again emphasizes the importance he placed on law and the breaking of it as a threat to man and the order of society in general.

Joshua Chamberlain's time as an educator at church, grade school and later at Bowdoin is a significant factor that again emphasizes his leadership. His ability to relate to the students as well as his dedication to tutor them, and force them to rewrite their studies carries over to his dedication as a newly commissioned officer as well as how he leads his regiment. The emphasis being on mission

accomplishment, soldier welfare and never ending realistic training. Chamberlain's advocacy of liberal thought for college students displays a leader who did not fear individualists but who had the ability to work with them without feeling his authority threatened. Though a stern disciplinarian he could communicate at all levels while being respected by subordinate and superior alike.

As a military leader Joshua Chamberlain learned those subjects he was responsible for in great detail. He demonstrated his dedication by learning as much about tactics and the art of war as he could. He trained along side his men, instead of riding his horse he partook in the marches as they did, and demonstrated an unusual knack and love for military life.

Joshua Chamberlain moved toward Gettysburg, a man of high moral and ethical character, a disciplinarian who cared genuinely for his men. A confident leader who had seen combat and demonstrated coolness under fire, with the innate ability to make sound, logical decisions. A leader who had successfully led his unit in battle and who's men believed in him.

The 20th Maine Regiment moved towards Gettysburg a highly disciplined, well trained and seasoned unit. A collection of hardy individuals who were molded together by a year of tough, precise and pertinent training. A unit that had experienced battle and had been quite successful

under the circumstances that occurred at Fredricksburg. A unit that had the same officers and sergeant chain of command since activation one year earlier, used to working and fighting as one. A highly disciplined outfit that believed in their colonel and leaders.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Willard Mosher Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. vi.

2. Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886), pp. 297-298.

General Grant had great respect for Joshua Chamberlain as described in his personal memoirs: Colonel J.L. Chamberlain of the 20th Maine, was wounded on the 18th. He was gallantly leading his brigade at the time, as he had been in the habit of doing in all engagements, in which he had been engaged. He had several times been recommended for a brigadier general for gallant and meritorious conduct. On this occasion, however, I promoted him on the spot and forwarded a copy of my order to the War Department. Additionally, when General Grant chose General Chamberlain to conduct the surrender ceremony at Appomattox, signifying the end of the war, this reflected the trust and respect that Grant had in his subordinate. This is described in Joshua Chamberlain's, The Passing of the Armies, pp. 248-249 and Oliver Norton's, The Attack and Defense of the Little Round Top, pp. 338-348. General Longstreet stated in a December 6, 1901 letter that he realized the worth of the Little Round Top as everything to the success of the Union battle, reflecting on Colonel Chamberlain's actions.

3. Ken Bandy, The Gettysburg Papers (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1978), pp. 496-497.

Addressing the significance of the Little Round Top, Boyd Vincent and Colonel Powell the 5th Corp's historian states:

Of the vital importance of this fight at Little Round Top to the Union cause there can be little doubt. There were other struggles during the war as great as that at Gettysburg. There were equal devotion and valor on that and other fields. But Gettysburg seems rightly regarded as the first real break in Lee's power, foreshadowing its end. There can be no question that Little Round Top was the critical point of the battle on July 2nd. As Colonel Powell says in his "History of the Fifth Corps": "Historians have exhausted themselves in describing the actions at the 'Peach Orchard.' ...Great stress has been laid on the results of Pickett's charge...but the truth of history is, that the little brigade of Vincent, with the self-sacrificing valor of the 20th Maine, under the gallant leadership of Joshua L. Chamberlain, fighting among the rocks and scrub-oaks

in the vale between the Round Tops and July 2, 1863, saved to the Union arms the historic field of Gettysburg. Had they faltered for one instant, there would have been no grand charge of Pickett; and Gettysburg would have been the mausoleum of departed hopes for the National cause; for Longstreet would have enveloped Little Round Top, capturing all on its crest from the rear and held the key of the whole position.

Robert Johnson, ed., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. III, (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle), p. 319. From the southern perspective the Battle of Gettysburg was crucial as a turning point in the war as evidenced by Major General E.M. Law, C.S.A. when he stated:

Gettysburg was the turning-point in the great struggle. Together with the fall of Vicksburg, which occurred simultaneously with the retreat of Lee's army toward the Potomac, it inspired the armies and people of the north with fresh courage and stimulated anew the hopes of ultimate success which were visibly flagging under an almost uninterrupted series of reverses to the Federal arms in Virginia, extending over a period of nearly two years. On the other hand, it was at Gettysburg that the right arm of the south was broken, and it must always stand out in Confederate annals.

4. William M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 17.

Dictionary of American History (New York: Scribners & Sons, 1976), pp. 194-195.

The ARROSTOOK WAR (1838-39), was an undeclared and bloodless war caused by the failure of the United States and Great Britain to determine the boundary between New Brunswick and what is now Maine. In 1820 Maine became a state. Almost immediately, ignoring the British contention that all land north of Mars Hill, in Aroostook Country, was British, the Maine legislature, jointly with Massachusetts, made grants to settlers along both branches of the Aroostook River. In 1827 the United States and Great Britain submitted the question to the king of the Netherlands. His compromise of 1831 was accepted by Great Britain, but rejected by the U.S. Senate in 1832. Finally, in January 1839, Rufus McIntire was appointed land agent, with authority to take a posse into the disputed area and oust Canadian lumberjacks working in the region. He was arrested by the Canadians, and within two months 10,000 Maine troops were either encamped along the Aroostook River or were on their way there. At the insistence of Maine congressmen, the federal government voted a force of 50,000 men and \$10

million in the event of war. To prevent a clash Gen. Winfield Scott was dispatched to negotiate a truce with the lieutenant governor of New Brunswick. This he did, and Great Britain, convinced of the seriousness of the situation, agreed to a boundary commission, whose findings were incorporated in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842.

5. Ibid., p. 20.

6. Ibid., p. 21. While at Whiting's Military Academy, Joshua Chamberlain worked as a teacher or as called in the 1800's "keeping school." As he was attending school full time also, the author is assuming he worked as a tutor. He did establish a winter evening singing school, while at the academy in the early to mid 1840's leading the sessions on his own bass viola.

7. Ibid.,.

8. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

9. Ibid., p. 23.

10. Ibid., p. 28.

11. Charles Hamling, Maine at Gettysburg, Report of Maine Commissioners (Portland, ME: Lakeside Press, 1898), pp. 546-558. At the dedication of the war monuments at Gettysburg on 3 October 1899, General Chamberlain addressed the audience focusing on his perceptions regarding the war and the moral and political issues.

12. Willard Mosher Wallace. Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas & Sons, 1960), p. 31.

13. Ibid., p. 34.

14. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

15. Ibid., p. 35.

16. Ibid., p. 34.

17. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 1.

18. Ibid., p. 5.

19. Frank Donovan, The Medal, the Story of the Medal of Honor (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962), p.5.

The Medal of Honor was not authorized for award until 1862, one year after the Civil War began. Bull Run was fought in July of 1861. Adelbert Ames received his award sometime after Congress officially authorized it based on his actions at the first battle.

20. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 3.

21. Ibid., pp. 2-5.

22. Ibid., p. 13.

23. Theodore Gerrish, Army Life, A Privates Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, ME: R. Thurston & Co., 1882), pp. 13-14.

24. Ibid., pp. 17-19. John Pullen in The Twentieth Maine pp. 20-21, covers this same subject but emphasizes the concept of the "esprit de corps" and high moral in the "Butterfield Brigade." General Butterfield is also known for composing the bugle call "Taps."

25. Herman Hattaway, How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 243.

The Battle of Antietam conducted on September 17, 1862 is considered the bloodiest day of the Civil War. The South suffered 13,724 casualties and the North 12,469. The South was on the defensive and though not routed was forced to withdraw to Virginia for General Lee had no way to be resupplied.

26. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), pp. 27-30.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 36.

29. Theodore Gerrish, Blue and Gray, A Graphic History of the Army of the Potomac and that of Northern Virginia (Bangor, ME Brady, Mace & Co., 1884), pp. 64-65.

Theodore Gerrish a private in H Company of the 20th Maine talks of Colonel Ames arresting two Lieutenants for using a short cut on a road march. When the Lieutenants plead for justice, Colonel Ames returned their request,

instructing them to use the proper military stationary when submitting a formal request.

30. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 44.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 45.

33. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 43.

34. Theodore Gerrish, Army Life, A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, ME: R. Thurston & Co., 1882), pp. 77-78.

John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maines, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), pp. 54-56.

35. Ibid., p. 56.

36. Jay Luvaas and Col. Harold Nelson, eds., The U.S. Army War College Guide to the Battles of Chancellorsville & Fredericksburg (Carlisle, PA: South Mountain Press, 1988) p. vi-xvii

The Battle of Fredricksburg ended in Union defeat under General Burnside by General Lee on 15 December 1862. A unique combination of large scale river crossings and street fighting ensued. The Army of the Northern Virginia was in a defensive position facing north which accounted for their success.

37. John Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), pp. 70-74.

Following vaccination at Stoneman's Switch (with what the men of the 20th Maine always believed was smallpox virus instead of vaccine), Surgeon N.P. Monroe of the 20th Maine reported on April 17 that there were eighty-four cases of smallpox in the regiment, thirty-two of them gravely serious, and that three men had died of the disease. Several other men gave every indication of coming down with smallpox.



38. Ibid., pp. 75-77.

At the Battle of Chancellorsville, The Army of Northern Virginia suffered 21 percent to 15 percent of The Army of the Potomac's casualties. Regardless, Lee is credited for a victory for routing the Union Army with a smaller force. Lee outmaneuvered Hooker.

39. Ibid., p. 77.

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORICAL INACCURACIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CHAMBERLAIN CHAPTERS OF THE KILLER ANGELS,

29 June and 1 July 1863

This chapter outlines the historical inaccuracies that Michael Shaara has willingly or inadvertently incorporated into The Killer Angels. The focus of the chapter is on Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment from 29 June 1863 to the morning of 2 July 1863. During this time the regiment road marched to Gettysburg where they were held in reserve awaiting commitment to battle.

The inaccuracies surfaced are not designed to discredit Michael Shaara or his research. Shaara does caveat his research and writing methods on page xiii in a paragraph to the reader, where he states "I have not consciously changed any fact."<sup>1</sup> It is the authors opinion that Michael Shaara restricted events and developed conversations to make certain leaders and circumstances seem more or less significant. The portrayal of the events accurately should assist the reader in placing The Killer Angels in proper perspective.

As Shaara introduces Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment in Chapter 2, (Monday, 29 June 1863) of The Killer Angels, he uses the incident of the mutineers from the 2nd Maine Regiment to a lead into the chapter. As Shaara portrays this event at the start of his novel he has listed it as occurring on 29 June 1863. In actuality, the event occurred more than a month earlier on 23 May 1863, immediately following the Battle of Chancellorsville.<sup>2</sup>

On that day one hundred and twenty soldiers from the 2nd Maine Regiment were assigned to the 20th Maine. The mutineers were escorted to the 20th Maine, in the vicinity of Stoneman's Switch, Virginia approximately one-hundred and seventy-five miles from Gettysburg. These men were from the city area of Bangor, and had enlisted under questionable conditions. Originally they enlisted for three months. After the Regiment was mustered, the Maine legislature called for the activation of more units. Each new regiment and others recently activated, including the 2nd Maine, were given a two year commitment. The soldiers signed the paperwork binding the directive as legal. Later, when the Federal officer mustered the unit into federal service he attempted to direct the men to sign a contract for a three year commitment. Some but not all soldiers did sign the papers.<sup>3</sup>

After entering the theatre of war the 2nd Maine watched other sister regiments return home after only three

months. As a result, in August 1861 the 2nd Maine mutinied, for the first time. The revolt was quelled and the leaders sent to prison. Later these men were returned to the unit. In May 1863, after two years of service, the 2nd Maine was deactivated and the majority of soldiers sent home. The three year men, who were deceived at the original enlistment, were required to continue service. These soldiers, having fought eleven battles and countless skirmishes and feeling they had honorably served their enlistment, mutinied and refused continued service.<sup>4</sup>

During the winter months considerable illness, and disease had reduced the ranks of the 20th Maine and they were in need of replacements. The men from the 2nd were a logical fill for the unit. Their reassignment to the 20th also allowed them to maintain a tie to the men and leaders from their state.

The author believes that Michael Shaara conveniently moved the incident into the period of his novel to portray Colonel Chamberlain's personality and leadership skills to the reader while simultaneously discrediting the Union senior leadership. Through this event, Michael Shaara portrays Chamberlain as a commander with a genuine concern for mankind, preserving the dignity of his men while still ensuring firm discipline is understood and implemented. He portrays Chamberlain in a speech to the mutineers emphasizing freedom and fighting for each other.

Its the idea that we all have value, you and me, we're worth something more than dirt. I never saw dirt I'd die for, but I'm not asking you to come join us and fight for dirt. What we're all fighting for in the end is each other.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, Shaara portrays Chamberlain as the commander who gave the mutineers options. He depicts a scenario where Chamberlain solicits the mutineers to join the fight because they are needed and welcomed:

Here's the situation. I've been ordered to take you along, and that's what I'm going to do. Under guard if necessary. But you can have your rifles if you want them. The whole Reb Army is up the road a ways waiting for us and this is no time for an argument like this. I tell you this: We sure can use you. We're down below half strength and we need you, no doubt of that. But whether you fight or not is up to you. Whether you come along, well, you're coming.<sup>6</sup>

To an extent Michael Shaara has depicted Joshua Chamberlain's personality accurately through the speech emphasizing reliance on each other as men. However, by reworking the event to portray Chamberlain as the commander who uses the techniques of a coach with the image of a firm father to entice the mutineer's to serve, he has misrepresented the event and Chamberlain's leadership style. The author found nothing in his research that eluded to what Michael Shaara portrayed. Chamberlain in his own words, when briefing the mutineers from the 2nd Maine actually said:

Then I called them together and pointed out to them the situation; that they could not be entertained as civilian guests by me; that they were by authority of the United States on my rolls as soldier, and I should treat them as soldiers should

be treated; that they should lose no right by obeying orders; and I would see what could be done for their claim.<sup>7</sup>

Chamberlain's own words portray a totally different situation. He allowed for no option to fight or not, they were soldiers and they would serve. Shaara portrays a situation where a long enticing speech is used to convince the 2nd Maine men to serve. In actuality, a short directive talk was conducted allowing for no options.

As Shaara portrays the situation just four days before the 20th's actual engagement of 2 July 1863, he has obviously inflated Joshua Chamberlain's image. He does this to set the tone for the rest of the book and depict Chamberlain as "the Northern hero." If this were true, it would be an extraordinary leader who could take one-hundred and twenty mutineers and mix them into a new unit, where they were half of the fighting force just four days from a major battle.

In actuality Chamberlain had a month to assimilate these men into his unit. It was a month of grueling training where the unit marched from the Fredricksburg area to Gettysburg. This type of constant marching, under extreme physical stress, and with the realization that they were moving into battle was appropriate training to assimilate the new men into the 20th Maine.<sup>8</sup>

Chamberlain also stated his method of incorporating the mutineers:

So I had placed their names on our rolls, distributed them by groups, to equalize companies, and particularly to break up the "esprit de corps" of banded mutineers.<sup>9</sup>

In The Killer Angels, Michael Shaara depicts a group of soldiers who show no facial expression or outward sign of emotion after Chamberlain's speech. This description portrays Chamberlain in a situation where he does not know what will transpire. He also mentions that six mutineers refuse to serve in the end.<sup>10</sup> The development of the scenario like this, portrays a group of hardened, devoted renegades who will stand by their decision to the end. Michael Shaara presents an atmosphere, where it will take an exceptionally great leader to convince these men to relinquish their attitudes and serve.

Joshua Chamberlain wrote of a different situation:

It is pleasant to record that all but one or two had gone back manfully to duty, to become some of the best soldiers in the regiment.<sup>9</sup>

Here again Shaara has used this situation to enhance Colonel Chamberlain's stature. The commander in his own words states that they all returned without much prodding and were good soldiers. Soldiers normally do not become good soldiers overnight. This statement by Chamberlain suggests that generally these men were good, and only needed leadership and a positive atmosphere, in order to perform as part of a unit. Michael Shaara uses this event to build an atmosphere of tenseness. This atmosphere combined with his

speech portrays Joshua Chamberlain to the reader of The Killer Angels as a compassionate leader, who's subordinates believed in him as a man not solely for his rank. This portrayal enhances Shaara's novel by reinforcing to the reader that the main northern character is truly an exceptionally great leader.

The description of Colonel Chamberlain receiving his orders from General Meade regarding the manner in which to handle the mutineers is questionable. As Colonel Chamberlain stated in 1913, the order said:

To take them into my regiment and make them do duty or shoot them down the moment they refused; these had been the very words of the corps commander in person.<sup>11</sup>

Michael Shaara's depiction of the contents of the orders to Colonel Chamberlain is accurate. However, Shaara uses the event to enhance Colonel Chamberlain's image, while attempting to discredit General Meade. The orders came from General Meade, who was the corps commander of the 5th corps, 3rd Brigade, 20th Maine Regiment during May 1863. On the day, Shaara depicts the situation, 29 June 1863, Meade was commander of the Army of the Potomac. This is a major historical inaccuracy. This error has been purposely inserted by Michael Shaara to emphasize Colonel Chamberlain's greatness. Chamberlain's decision to disregard Meade's orders depicts a leader who finds his own solution to a problem, with the genuine concern for the



soldiers. Also, the author believes Shaara wanted to keep the historical aspects of the event close to the truth.

Shaara portrays a scene where Chamberlain contemplates in great detail his orders and the problem. He describes Colonel Chamberlain questioning the orders:

Chamberlain said grumpily, thinking: Shoot them? Maine men? How can I shoot Maine men? I'll never be able to go home.<sup>12</sup>

Factually, Colonel Chamberlain reacted to the mutineers situation using his abilities and experience as a commander to solve the problem. No one knows what went through his mind, but he obviously understood that General Meade's orders were directed to inform the commander of the latitude he had. In reality Joshua Chamberlain merely used his discretionary power to handle the situation due to his position and responsibility. The thought of shooting the men was never a question. Chamberlain solved the problem in his own manner.

Michael Shaara's description of General Meade on Page xx of The Killer Angels obviously displays his bias towards the man and his intent to use every opportunity to discredit the General. He describes: General Meade as a:

Bad tempered, balding, full of self-pity, no decision he made at Gettysburg will be decisive, except perhaps the last.<sup>13</sup>

Shaara's use of the mutineers situation, incorporating Joshua Chamberlain into his scenario to discredit

General Meade, is historically inaccurate and a slight on Chamberlain's loyalty.

Shaara uses the men who refused to continue service with the 2nd Maine Regiment as a vehicle to depict Joshua Chamberlain's leadership style and personality. However, as stated, it must be understood that a month of significant training and combat service was conducted to assimilate the mutineers into their new regiment. This established unit cohesion and a sense of purpose. Colonel Chamberlain's decision to assign the men to different units, as well as his belief that the soldiers were good men, is also important when analyzing this event.

Finally, Shaara's inaccurate incorporation of General Meade into the scenario, is a convenient method for him to discredit Meade while enhancing Joshua Chamberlain's status. Ultimately, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain had an extraordinary leadership task to handle with the mutineers. His approach to solving the problem was handled in a textbook manner. The incorporation of the principles of leadership outlined in Chapter Two, FM 22-100 Military Leadership into the solution support this. There is no doubt that he was an exceptional leader, and the events contributed to his success, although they may not have occurred as dramatically as Michael Shaara depicts.

Michael Shaara's portrayal of General Meade is not valid. The orders sent by Meade to Chamberlain when he was

the corps commander in regards to the mutineers were liberally interpreted by Chamberlain. He understood that they were orders with limits and if he could solve the problem the maximum punishment was not needed. General Meade was a competent officer and the most capable to command the Army of the Potomac at the time. It is significant to note that General Lee felt the same way, further discrediting Shaara's depiction of Meade.<sup>14</sup>

The events of 1 July 1863 as the 20th Maine marches towards Gettysburg contain minor inaccuracies but none that affect the outcome of events at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Shaara states that when the 20th Maine reached the Pennsylvania border the people were friendly. He also mentions that in northern Maryland the people were selling foodstuffs instead of giving it to the soldiers as was normal for the time.<sup>15</sup> Factually, the people in southern Pennsylvania were not friendly to the Union soldiers, they were selling their goods not giving them away. As the 20th Maine moved north, reaching the area of Hanover, where the civilians were exposed to hardships imposed by the Confederate army, the people were happy to see the soldiers. As the units moved closer towards Gettysburg, the more appreciative they were of a positive reception.<sup>16</sup> The Northern forces were praised, cheered and applauded as they approached Gettysburg. The people stayed out into darkness cheering them on and encouraging the men. This is

a minor point but it set a positive atmosphere for the 20th Maine Regiment approaching the battlefield versus the Confederate forces, who knew they had no popular support in the area.

Finally in this chapter Shaara takes the opportunity to again slight General Meade, although there is no evidence to substantiate it. On the night of 1 July 1863, as the 3rd Brigade, Fifth Corps approached Gettysburg a rumor of General McClellan assuming command of the Army of the Potomac was spread by an unknown staff officer. Private Theodore Gerrish of the 20th Maine stated when they heard of the rumor: "Men waved their hats and cheered until they were hoarse and wild with excitement."<sup>17</sup> Later when it was proved to be false, the soldiers continued on with their mission. However, Shaara takes the opportunity to overemphasize this fact through Colonel Chamberlain's thought process when he states:

Well, Chamberlain thought, there's no McClellan. There's only Meade, whom none of these people know, let alone like and he'll be cautious.<sup>18</sup>

Using Chamberlain again to advocate Shaara's point of discrediting Meade is unfounded, there is no evidence to support this thought. In fact, Chamberlain did not know General Meade very well. He did speak at General Meade's Memorial Services on 29 May 1880, at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Chamberlain was known at times for being

impatient with some of General Meade's decisions, but he appreciated his devotion and solid character.<sup>19</sup>

In reality, Joshua Chamberlain discredits what Michael Shaara is trying to convey about General Meade when he wrote his own article on the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913. Referring to the positioning of the Union forces by General Meade, Colonel Chamberlain states:

Our Second Corps, Hancock's, had taken position on the ridge, from the cemetery, southerly; and on the extension on this line our Third Corps, Sickles' was forming its left, we were told, resting on the northern slope of Little Round Top. This information indicated a defensive attitude for us, and deepened our confidence in Meade.<sup>20</sup>

This statement by the 20th Maine's colonel, depicts a totally different opinion of General Meade than Michael Shaara has inaccurately outlined.

Chapter Four (Wednesday, 1 July, 1863) entails minor inaccuracies that are directed toward discrediting General Meade. Shaara's portrayal of General Meade is wrong for he was the most qualified officer to command the Army of the Potomac at that time. He had proven success in battle and had won President Lincoln's, General Halleck's and General Lee's confidence.

Chapter Two, (Thursday, 2 July, 1863, the second day), of The Killer Angles entails fictional and factual depictions of the early morning events. Shaara's portrayal of the 20th Maine Regiment in a bivouac area is accurate. Though not mentioned, the area was east of Powers Hill

within a mile of General Meade's Headquarters and the Little Round Top.

Michael Shaara uses this setting to describe the men of the 20th Maine Regiment discovering a black runaway slave. He portrays a scenario where they care for the man and his wounds. Shaara uses this event to have conversations between Chamberlain and his enlisted men regarding blacks, their right to freedom and the morality of the war. The portrayal of Joshua Chamberlain's feelings and thoughts on the social subject of slavery and the difference between blacks and whites in The Killer Angels is similar to other documented accounts.<sup>21</sup>

Shaara depicts Chamberlain verbally responding to his soldier Sergeant Kilrain in regards to the blackman as saying: "To me there was never any difference." and "How can they (slaveowners) look in the eyes of a man and make a slave of him and then quote the Bible?"<sup>22</sup> This is supported by Willard Wallace in the Soul of the Lion when he characterizes Joshua Chamberlain as: "He strongly disapproved of slavery on moral and religious grounds."<sup>23</sup> This description of Joshua Chamberlain used by Wallace came from Hatch's history of Bowdoin College. Though I found no documentation to support Michael Shaara's depiction of the events concerning a runaway slave assisted by the 20th Maine men, the portrayal in regards to Chamberlain's beliefs and personality can be assumed as accurate. This event does

assist the reader in understanding Joshua Chamberlain's beliefs.

In Chapter Two of the Second Day at Gettysburg, Shaara has reconstructed an actual event and uses Colonel Chamberlain again to discredit the Union leadership. On that morning, all Union commanders were required to read to their regiments an order from General Meade regarding the seriousness and importance of the impending battle.

Excerpts of the speech were remembered and documented:

Enemy are on our soil, whole country now looks anxiously to this army to deliver it. Homes, firesides and domestic alters are involved. Corps and other commanders are authorized to order the instant death of any soldiers who fails in his duty at this hour.<sup>24</sup>

These excerpts came from The Twentieth Maine, and Wallace in his book Soul of the Lion mentions: "Fifth corps listened to a written statement by Meade on the gravity of the situation."<sup>25</sup> Joshua Chamberlain never mentions this event in his Battle Report or the Hearst Magazine article of 1913. In fact there is no documentation saying Chamberlain himself ever read this order. Joshua Chamberlain's article "Through Blood and Fire at Gettysburg" is an in depth step by step account of the battle beginning on 1 July the day before this event. If it was as critical as Shaara portrayed, with even the slightest impact, Chamberlain would have mentioned it.

Shaara has taken this insignificant event and portrays it out of context when he writes, Chamberlain read the order:

Hour of decision, enemy on soil. When he came to the part about men who failed to do their duty being punished by instant death, it embarrassed him. The men looked up at him with empty faces. Chamberlain read the order and added nothing, went off by himself to sit down. Damn fool order. Mind of West Point at Work.<sup>26</sup>

As Joshua Chamberlain never mentions this event and other works such as The Twentieth Maine by John Pullen who used officers and enlisted soldiers memories, pays minor attention to this situation, it obviously was insignificant. Shaara in another attempt to discredit Meade, through the use of Chamberlain, has conveniently interpreted a historical event to fit his needs and focus.

The significance of the historical inaccuracies by Shaara focus on portraying Joshua Chamberlain as the novel's Northern hero and a great leader. By portraying the events in the context Michael Shaara has, he has conveyed to the reader the character Colonel Chamberlain as a compassionate, fair leader. A commander dedicated to the Union cause as well as a man who does what is morally correct at all times. He portrays a man who is not the normal person, possibly a man who ranks above most people.

By discrediting the senior leadership, Shaara depicts an atmosphere where it is the brigade commanders and below who are competent. An atmosphere where the junior officers



not the Generals are influencing men to fight and die. The colonels and below are the ones who will ultimately influence the battle, not the generals. Shaara uses his initial chapters in The Killer Angels to portray Colonel Joshua Chamberlain as a special kind of man and leader.

## ENDNOTES

1. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. xiii.
2. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), pp. 77-81.
3. Ibid.,.
4. Ibid.,.
5. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 30.
6. Ibid., p. 29
7. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg," Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), p. 900.

These words were what Joshua Chamberlain recalled saying in 1913. Though Colonel Chamberlain's statement is made through recollection, it is the author's opinion that they are accurate in relation to what was said on 23 May 1863. John J. Pullen uses Chamberlain's words from the Hearst Magazine article on page 30 of The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War. Mr. Pullen has also researched the accuracy of the event as outlined in his notes. He cross referenced the event using the Maine Archives, 1, 331. "Transfer of Men from the 2nd Maine." He also used the History of the 2nd Maine: Whitman and True, pp. 37-42, 44, 55. and the Regimental Records, Joshua Chamberlain's letter to AAG, 3rd Brigade, July 30, 1863. If there was any inaccuracy it should have surfaced in these accounts.

8. Theodore Gerrish, Army Life, A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, ME: B. Thurston & Co. 1882), pp. 20-25.

Theodore Gerrish of the 20th Maine emphasized the physical hardships endured on the marches, as well as dedication of those who continue to march all night to catch up with their regiment when he wrote:

Look at the men of which the brigade is composed, and they are only a sample of the entire army. It is "route-step, and arms-at-will." The ranks are in disorder, and nearly every file is broken. Every man is for himself; many have fallen out from the ranks;

others are footsore and exhausted, - see them limp and reel and stagger as they endeavor to keep up with their regiments. These men were doubtless acquainted with fatigue before they entered the army, but this fearful strain in marching so many miles, in heavy marching order, for successive days, is too much for them.

The first class will crawl into the barns and outbuildings to sleep and escape the "Provost Guard." The others will tramp painfully on all night long, and perhaps overtake their comrades in season to begin with them tomorrow's march. It is a sad spectacle upon which we look, and all caused by the sinfulness of men.

9. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg," Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913) p. 900.

Michael Shaara says that six mutineers did not return to duty. This does not parallel Joshua Chamberlain's statement in 1913 but does agree with John Pullen's description of the event in The Twentieth Maine. This further substantiates the author's statement in Chapter 1 that Shaara used Pullen's source for information.

10. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 31.

11. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg," Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913) p. 900.

12. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 19.

13. Ibid., p. xx.

Warren W. Hassler, Commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), pp. 159-194.

Contrary to Michael Shaara's portrayal, General Meade could be called the "Old Reliable" of the Army of the Potomac based on his consistent performance throughout the Civil War. He was tall and graceful, though slightly stooped, possessed an aquiline nose and quick-moving eyes, and his graying brown hair was thinning. He wore spectacles for nearsightedness, and his regulation army hat brim was pulled down all around. His commanding presence and steady mien were marred only by a sharp, violent temper which cascaded forth in moments of

great stress. This mode is difficult to approach him except with important matters in the heat of the battle. None recognized this irascibility more than Meade himself, and he was swift to make amends. But on occasion he indulged in self-pity and self-deprecation, and he was thin-skinned to criticism.

But Meade's assets bulked large. He was adept at terrain analysis and in the combined arms of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Though cautious, he was an unrelenting combatant, and he was a man of the highest honor, character, and integrity.

Additional description of General Meade is in Chapter II note 21. Herman Hattaway in his book How the North Won, A Military History of the Civil War (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 404. states that General Meade was the choice of both President Lincoln and General Halleck to replace General Hooker. This outlines the confidence the countries leadership had in General Meade.

14. A.L. Long, Memoirs of Robert E. Lee (New York: J.M. Stoddart & Company, 1886), p. 274.

15. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 31.

16. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 94.

17. Theodore Gerrish, Army Life, A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, ME: B. Thurston & Co., 1882), p. 101.

18. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 124.

19. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 72.

20. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg," Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913) p. 897.

21. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 34.

Charles Hamling, Maine at Gettysburg, Report of Maine Commissioners (Portland, ME: Lakeside Press, 1898), pp. 546-558.

22. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), pp. 176-177.

23. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 34.

24. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 97.

25. Willard M. Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 80.

26. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 175.

## CHAPTER V

### HISTORICAL INACCURACIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CHAMBERLAIN CHAPTERS OF THE KILLER ANGELS, 2 JULY AND 3 JULY 1863

Thursday, 2 July 1863, The Second Day, Chapter Four is the main portion of The Killer Angels describing Colonel Chamberlain and his regiment at Gettysburg. In this Chapter the 20th Maine occupies the Little Round Top, defends and attacks the enemy, ultimately defeating and spoiling Confederate attempts to flank the Union left. The successful flanking of the Union line could have easily resulted in a route of the Federal forces from behind, ultimately leading to a Confederate victory. Generally, Michael Shaara has portrayed the events in this chapter accurately, however there are descriptions that need to be clarified and expanded for accuracy.

The chapter begins by portraying Colonel Strong Vincent moving quickly to the bivouac area of the 20th Maine to alert Colonel Chamberlain that the Confederates are attacking the Union left flank. Additionally, he takes the opportunity to describe the event that General Sickles, the

3rd corps commander has made a mistake in placement of his forces; and he is to blame for the entire situation as outlined on pages 207-209 of The Killer Angels.<sup>1</sup> Shaara presents a scenario that Sickles had failed to tie into Hancock's Second Corps to the right and occupy the high ground to the left. The entire problem had been caused by Sickles and required the 20th Maine to hastily prepare and move for the upcoming mission. Additionally, Michael Shaara emphasizes that the questionable decisions Sickles has made are a result of his being a "politician made general" at the wars beginning. Referring to Sickles, Shaara writes:

He didn't like the ground. So he just up and moved his whole corps forward, hour or so ago. I saw them go. Amazing. Beautiful. Full marching line forward, as if they were going to pass in review. Moved right on out to the road down there. Leaving this hill uncovered. Isn't that amazing? Vincent grimaced. Politicians, well, lets' go.<sup>2</sup>

Shaara's portrayal of the 20th Maine Regiment's commitment to the fight at Gettysburg is inaccurate. It is essential to clarify the circumstances of this event to understand the urgency of the situation, its importance for the success of the entire Union force, and to place credit where credit is due. Key figures have been left out from Shaara's account, that must be recognized to accurately portray the battle.

Prior to the decision to commit the 20th Maine and the 3rd Brigade to the Round Tops, the entire 5th Corps had been alerted and was moving from their bivouac location

behind Powers Hill to the Union left flank. General Meade had anticipated the weakness on the Union left and had instructed General Sykes to move the 5th Corps to the east in the direction of the Round Tops. Reconnaissance units of the 5th Corps were already sent forward and passing north of Little Round Top, prior to the decision to actually occupy them with 3rd Brigade forces under Colonel Vincent.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the movement of General Sickles's Corps another event causing the exposed flank was General Buford receiving permission from General Meade's staff to withdraw to rest and rearm. After his initial engagement on July 1, 1863 with the Confederate forces near the town of Gettysburg, General Buford and two brigades of his cavalry were given the mission to screen the left flank of the Union line in the vicinity west and southwest of the Round Tops. After stopping the Confederate forces on day one of the fight, awaiting the Union infantry, General Buford had suffered numerous casualties, and was short of ammunition and supplies. Since the majority of the Union army had arrived at the battlefield, he requested permission to refit. General Pleasanton, the Cavalry Chief and General Butterfield, the Army Chief of Staff, gave General Meade the impression that another cavalry unit would replace Buford. Meade authorized the release of Buford, but no unit replaced him. When Meade found this out, and became aware of the Sickles situation, he moved the 5th Corps east.<sup>4</sup>



Shaara's portrayal of General Sickles' movement of his corps forward of the Union line is not completely accurate. Ultimately, General Sickles violated General Meade's intent by deciding the location given him was not as defensible as the terrain forward of his position. He occupied the high ground forward of Hancock's 2nd Corps, and in between the Round Tops, not connecting his flank with General Hancock. However, General Sickles had requested throughout the day advice on his decision from various members of General Meade's staff. Finally in the afternoon at approximately 1500 hours, General Warren surfaced the problem of Sickles' Corps' location to General Meade. Though numerous staff officers such as Colonel Edmond Schriver had inspected the corps locations and supposedly reported to General Meade, the information on Sickles' location was not received until General Warren reported. Even when General Meade rode forward to Sickles' position, he did not specifically say that the Third Corps was in the wrong location. General Sickles explained to General Meade that he chose the position based on how he saw the benefits of the terrain. He told Meade that Generals Ludlow, Warren and Colonel Schriver had seen his location and did not question the situation. General Meade merely said he would reinforce the weak spots with elements of the 5th Corps and reinforce with more artillery. General Sickles' movement forward to the Emmitsburg Road, assisted in disrupting

General Longstreet's attack. The Confederates did not expect units that far forward.<sup>5</sup>

Shaara's use of Colonel Vincent to make General Sickles look incompetent is inaccurate. This event did contribute to the need for forces to be located on the Round Tops, but it was not the only reason. The movement of Buford's cavalry as well as the failure of General Meade's staff to recognize the Round Tops were not defended also were reasons for the exposed flank.

The major historical factor that Michael Shaara has deleted from The Killer Angels, is the decision process that transpired to commit a northern unit to the defense of the Little Round Top. The significance of this event is unquestionably vital, for without it the 3rd Brigade of the 5th corps would never have been committed to the Round Tops, which resulted in the 20th Maine Regiment and its Colonel occupying the location to conduct their heroic actions of 2 July 1863.

Shaara portrays in his book on pages 206-210 a scenario where Colonel Vincent returns to the Brigade's bivouac area to take Colonel Chamberlain and the 20th Maine to a defensive position on the Little Round Top. As stated earlier this is totally untrue and inaccurate. The significance of the inaccuracy is the failure to recognize the appropriate individual who factually saved the Union left from being enveloped.

General Warren, the Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac working directly for General Meade, was the critical decision maker and tactically astute staff officer who realized the criticality of occupying the Little Round Top. Warren had inspected the Union front on the second day at Gettysburg and had talked directly with General Sickles when he saw the 3rd Corps far forward of their original position and not occupying the Round Tops to their left flank. At the corps commanders meeting with General Meade at 1500 hours in the vicinity of Powers Hill, General Warren surfaced this problem to ensure General Meade and Sickles would solve it. Immediately following the meeting at 1530 hours, Warren rode to the Little Round Top to conduct a reconnaissance.<sup>6</sup>

Upon reaching the hill, Warren saw that there was only a signal detachment at the north end of the crest. By personally conducting the reconnaissance, Warren realized the significance of this piece of terrain and he is known to have described the height as the: "key of the whole position."<sup>7</sup>

Additionally during the reconnaissance Warren observed movement of Confederate forces to the front of the Union 3rd Corps. He discovered that there were numerous Confederate troops along the Emmitsburg Road and the potential for the Union left, specifically Sickles' Corps to be flanked, was very real.

It is at this point, somewhere between 1530 and 1600 hours, on 2 July 1863, that Warren decides to ensure this terrain is occupied. He sends an aide to General Meade to request a division. The request is granted, and Humphrey's unit is allocated. He additionally sends an aide to Sickles's 3rd Corps to receive the support of a Brigade sized element. Sickles refuses because of the intense fight he is consumed in. Sickles directs the aide, Lieutenant Mackenzie, to General Sykes of the 5th Corps which had been ordered east by Meade, and was in the vicinity of the Little Round Top. Sykes consented to the request and committed Barnes's Division which had Colonel Vincent's 3rd Brigade in the front, led by Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment.<sup>8</sup>

Upon commitment to the fight, Colonel Vincent with his color bearer went forward on horseback to conduct a reconnaissance of the Little Round Top. Colonel Rice, the commander of the 44th New York, was ordered to move the Brigade to the highground to link-up with Colonel Strong Vincent and to be assigned positions.

The significance of this event in comparison to Michael Shaara's portrayal, is that The Killer Angels alludes to Colonel Vincent's recognition of the importance of the Little Round Top and the graveness of Sickles supposed mistake in positioning his corps. In reality, General Warren is the man who determined the necessity for

occupying the highground, since he considered it the anchor of the Union left flank. Also, Vincent's return to the bivouac area to guide the 20th Maine forward is wrong. The Brigade was already moving east, as a result of Meade's guidance to his corps commander Sykes at his 1500 meeting. Meade had already determined the need of the 5th Corps somewhere on the left flank. Finally, the Brigade moved to the heights of the Round Top led by Colonel Rice not Vincent. Each regimental commander met Vincent on the highground to receive the guidance for their positioning and the defense of the Union left flank.

The decision made to commit the 3rd Brigade to the defense of the Little Round Top surfaces two additional events that Shaara fails to outline accurately in his novel. On page 208 of The Killer Angels Michael Shaara describes a cannonball exploding near Colonel Chamberlain and his brother, Tom. Both men were moving side by side to the summit of the hill. Joshua Chamberlain, realizing the severity of the situation and the possibility of his mother losing two sons to enemy fire, orders Tom to the rear of the regiment to control stragglers. Chamberlain's decision was based on the pretense that with the brothers separated, the chance of both being killed would be reduced.<sup>9</sup>

The scenario portrayed by Michael Shaara is accurate but lacking in one important detail. Not only was Joshua flanked on one side by his brother Tom, but he also was

flanked by his other brother John. John had been sent to the battle location as part of the Christian Commission. Joshua Chamberlain aware of this, requested John's attachment to the 20th Maine Regiment to work as a member of the field hospital since no surgeons were available. Upon the explosion of the cannon fire, Chamberlain did send Tom to the rear of the regimental formation to control stragglers and John forward of the unit to establish a location for the wounded soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of this inaccuracy is that Shaara failed to demonstrate Joshua Chamberlain's genuine concern for the welfare of his men by ensuring hospital facilities were a priority. Additionally, Chamberlain displayed unwavering coolness under fire and the ability to think ahead, an attribute of great combat leaders.

The final point falsely depicted in The Killer Angels is the manner and urgency in which the Little Round Top was occupied. As Vincent and Chamberlain move up the slopes of the Little Round Top, Michael Shaara depicts a casual scenario where Vincent said: "Don't mean to rush you people, but perhaps we better double time."<sup>11</sup>

This event depicting Colonel Vincent with a casual sense of urgency detracts from the reality and accuracy of the situation. The actual occupation of the Little Round Top was an urgent foot race between the forces of the 20th

Maine Regiment under Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 15th Alabama Regiment commanded by William C. Oates.

The 15th Alabama as had the 20th Maine Regiment, conducted a major foot march prior to their commitment at Gettysburg. They had moved from New Guilford, approximately twenty-five miles to the west of Gettysburg, and with little or no sleep they were immediately committed into battle to seize the Little Round Top. General Hood, as well as Longstreet, had realized the importance of this key terrain and pushed for its capture and occupation. As the 20th Maine raced up the Little Round Top from the east and north, the 15th Alabama moved toward it from a southerly direction. The 15th Alabama reached the summit of the Big Round Top but then halted to rest and await return of a watering detail of twenty-two men who were filling canteens. At this point the 15th Alabama possibly lost critical time, which allowed the 20th Maine to gain control of the Little Round Top. As the 15th Alabama awaited the watering party, Colonel Oates was ordered to press on to the Little Round Top where ultimately he and the 15th Alabama were met by a volley of fire from the 20th Maine, who were already in defensive positions. This lack of water, as Colonel Oates felt when he looked back years later "contributed largely" to his failure to take the Little Round Top.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the reason why the 15th Alabama did not take the hill, the 20th Maine had

succeeded and established the unit disposition for the approaching battle.

The 20th's guidance from Colonel Vincent at this time of critical urgency was quite different than Michael Shaara portrays through the words of Joshua Chamberlain:

Our Vincent soldierly and self reliant, hearing this entreaty for Round Top, waited word from no superior, but taking the responsibility ordered us to turn and push for Round Top at all possible speed, and dashed ahead to study how best to place us. Here as we could we took the double quick.<sup>13</sup>

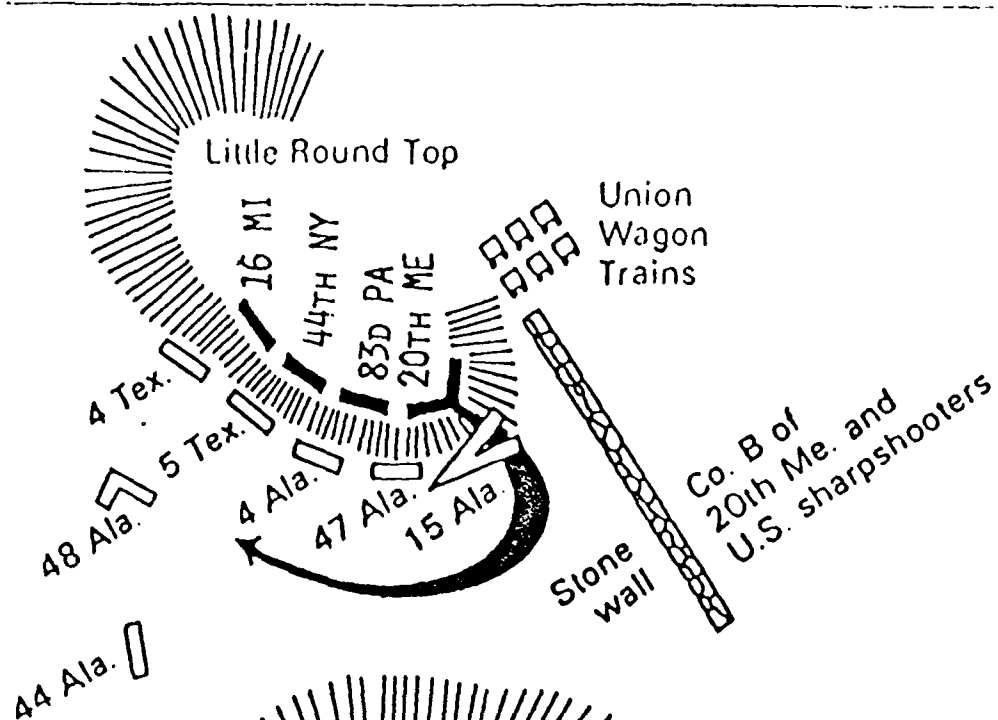
The actual words of Colonel Chamberlain, depict a situation of critical urgency. However, the flanking and occupation of the Round Tops by the Confederate Army had already been realized by General Warren. Colonel Vincent and Chamberlain responded with a sense of urgency quite different than what Michael Shaara depicts.

As the 20th Maine Regiment reached the summit of the Little Round Top, Colonel Chamberlain met with Colonel Vincent to receive guidance for the positioning of his force. Here a number of versions of Joshua Chamberlain's orders have been written over the years, all partially different than Michael Shaara's interpretation. The Killer Angels version of the orders states:

Vincent said, you are the extreme left of the Union line. Do you understand that? You cannot withdraw, under any conditions. If you go, the line is flanked. If you go, they'll go up the hilltop and take us in the rear. You must defend this place to the last.<sup>14</sup>



Map From: Willard M. Wallace, Soul Of The Lion, P. 96.



The 20th Maine on Little Round Top.

Colonel Chamberlain states in his 6 July 1863 Battle Report, that Colonel Vincent instructed me that the enemy was expected shortly to make a desperate attempt to turn our left flank, and that the position assigned to me must be held at every hazard.<sup>15</sup>

Later in 1913, Colonel Chamberlain again wrote on the subject of his orders from Colonel Vincent where he stated:

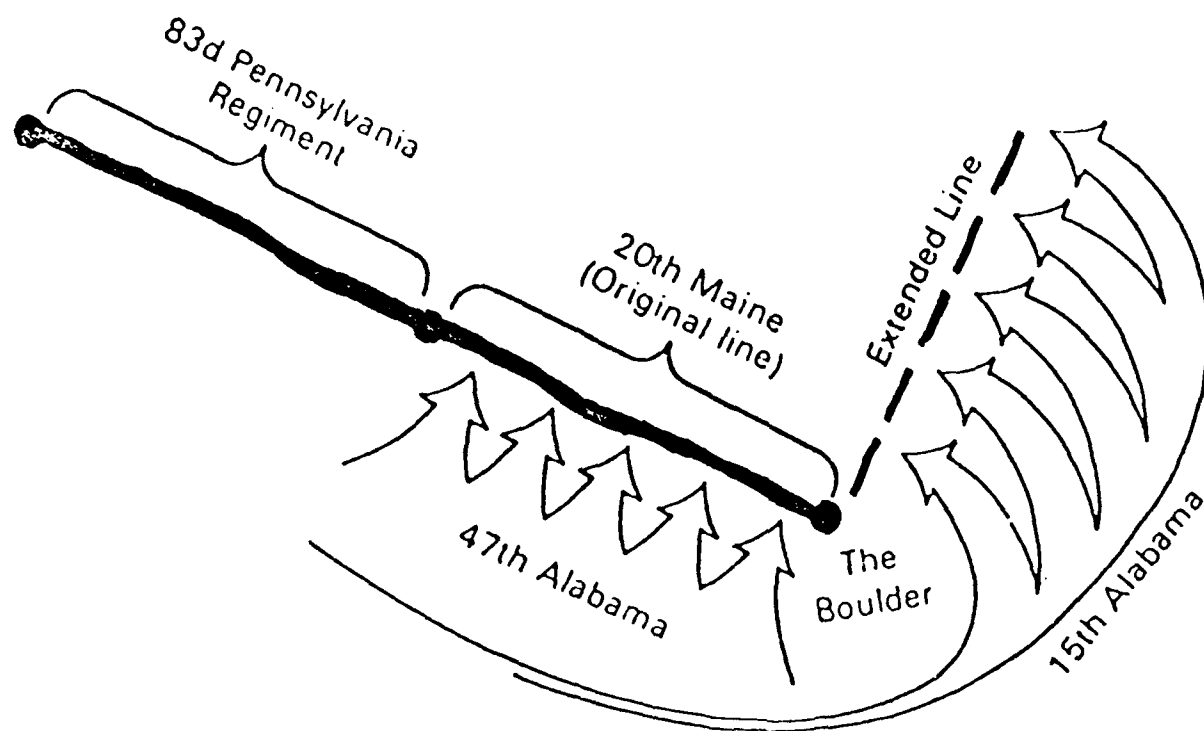
I place you here! This is the left of the Union Line. You understand: you are to hold this ground at all cost: I did understand full well.<sup>16</sup>

The interpretation and accurate portrayal of Chamberlain's orders at the Little Round Top are critical when analyzing his success in the battle. Shaara's excerpt where he states: "you cannot withdraw, under any conditions" describes very narrow and specific guidance. Shaara portrays to the reader that no latitude was contained in the orders. In reality Joshua Chamberlain later stated that:

Our orders to hold the ground had to be liberally interpreted. That front had to be held, and that rear covered.<sup>17</sup>

Joshua Chamberlain's decision to fold back the left of his flank so as to give up some terrain in order to prevent the envelopment of his forces was the critical decision that prevented Confederate success. Shaara's orders do not reflect the latitude exercised by Chamberlain.

Additionally, Michael Shaara portrays a confused Chamberlain attempting to interpret his orders when he states:



The 20th Maine defensive lines.

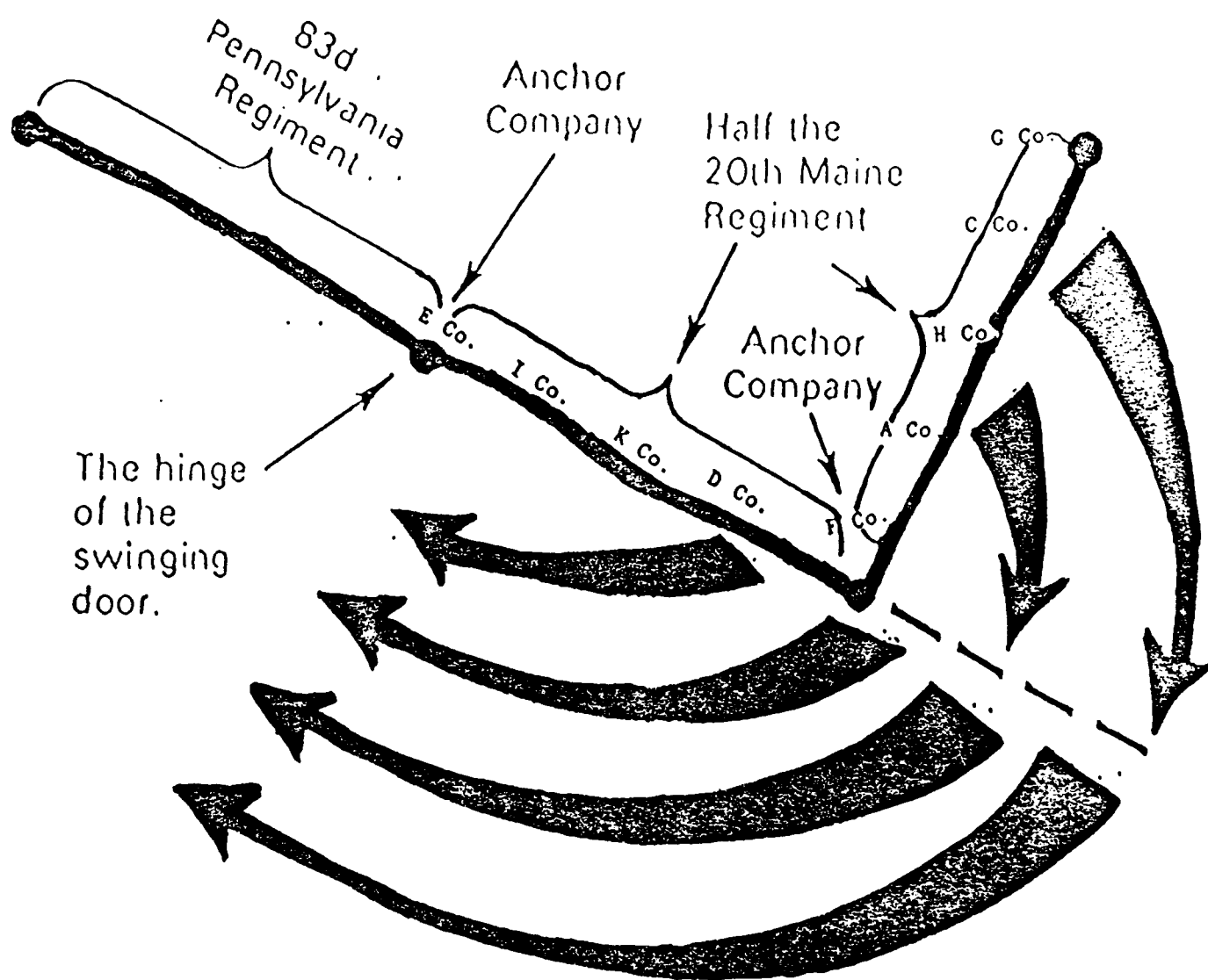
Chamberlain took a short walk. Hold to the last. To the last what? Exercise in rhetoric. Last man? Last shell? Last foot of ground? Last Reb?<sup>18</sup>

This thought is definitely unfounded and inaccurate as the Colonel states himself that he did understand his orders in note sixteen. Additionally Chamberlain would never have had the chance for a walk, since the Confederates attacked almost as soon as his forces were positioned. Michael Shaara does set an accurate tone for the reader to understand the criticality of Chamberlain and the 20th Maine's position in holding the Union left flank. However, he misleads the reader and minimizes the importance of Chamberlain's ability to make those essential combat decisions, through the use of a strict directive of not withdrawing under any conditions. By depicting Colonel Chamberlain as not sure of what he is to hold, Shaara again misguides the reader for he clearly understood his orders. Colonel Vincent's concise, clear intent allowed Joshua Chamberlain to position his forces, maneuver them as he saw appropriate to maintain the Union flank and counter any envelopment.

Michael Shaara's portrayal of the actual battle scene is accurate up until the bayonet charge. The inaccurate conversations between the various officers and men are merely Shaara's manner of making the novel realistic. The flow of the fight as well as the repositioning of the 20th

Maine Regiment to fold back at a ninety degree angle is entirely accurate. The attacks and outcomes of the attacks are accurately depicted.

Michael Shaara's portrayal of the bayonet charge does portray accurately the overall outcome of the battle, but the sequence, use of subordinates, and narration, is inaccurate. After the major flanking attempt by Colonel Oate's, where the 15th Alabama was repelled, the soldiers of the 20th Maine attempted to rearm by redistributing ammunition and getting ammunition from the dead soldiers around them. It was at this point that they requested ammunition making a tense situation for their commander even worse. Additionally, the 47th Alabama to the right of the 20th Maine had achieved some initial success, resulting in enfilade fire falling to the rear of the 20th Maine Regiment. At this point Chamberlain made his critical decision to attack. He informed Captain Ellis Spear who commanded "G" company of his intent to wheel the regiment right. On Chamberlain's order with G company as guide, the Regiment would sweep across the front of the original defense. Additionally he ordered Captain A.W. Clark of "E" Company to ensure the right flank remained tied into the 83rd Pennsylvania.<sup>19</sup> These factors were essential to Colonel Chamberlain's success and were not covered in detail in Shaara's novel except for a minor note implying the tasks were conducted.



The charge of the 20th Maine.

It is at this point after Colonel Chamberlain has decided to charge, that Lieutenant Melcher of "E" company approaches Chamberlain to request permission to move forward of the defense line to assist casualties. Shaara, portrays this event occurring before the decision, implying it assisted in swaying the Colonel to charge. Additionally, Shaara portrays Lieutenant Melcher as a naive and inexperienced officer by stating: "Lieutenant Melcher said, perplexed, Sir excuse me, but what's a right wheel forward?"<sup>20</sup>

This depiction of Melcher is totally false. Melcher is credited for being one of the main catalysts in forming the momentum for the 20th Maine's charge. After Colonel Chamberlain, politely denies Melcher's request and instructs him to move back to his company, the young Lieutenant would be standing by anxiously for the attack command.<sup>21</sup>

Upon ordering Melchers return to his command, Colonel Chamberlain gave his famous order. Michael Shaara portrays the Colonel and the events in the following manner:

Chamberlain raised his saber, bawled at the top of his voice Fix Bayonets! Bayonets were coming out, clinking, and clattering. He limped to the front, toward the great boulder where Tozier stood with the colors, Kilrain at his side. He stepped out into the open, balanced on the gray rock. Tozier had lifted the colors into the clear. The Rebs were thirty yards off. Chamberlain raised his saber, let loose the shout that was the greatest sound he could make, boiling the yell up from his chest: "Fix Bayonets! Charge! Fix Bayonets! Charge! Fix Bayonets! Charge!" He leaped down from the boulder, still screaming, his voice beginning to crack and give, and all around him his

men were roaring animal screams and he saw the whole Regiment rising and pouring over the wall and beginning to bound down through the dark bushes, over the dead and dying and wounded, hats coming off, hair flying, mouths making sounds, one man firing as he ran, the last bullet, last round.<sup>22</sup>

Michael Shaara's depiction of Colonel Chamberlain's order to attack and the events of the actual charge at the Little Round Top contain a basis of fact but lack accuracy due to the author's restructuring of the event to formulate Colonel Chamberlain as the sole hero of the battle. In analyzing this event Colonel Chamberlain did conduct a masterful feat of heroic leadership, however his subordinate officers and disciplined men were as equal in the responsibility for success as their colonel.

The order given by Colonel Chamberlain never contained the words fix bayonet or charge as stated by Michael Shaara. Colonel Chamberlain himself states:

The men turned towards me, one word was enough "Bayonet!" It caught like fire, and swept along the ranks. The men took it up with a shout - one could not say whether from the pit, or the song of the morning star! It was vain to order "Forward," no mortal could have heard it in the mighty hosanna that was swinging the sky. Nor would he wait to hear. These are things still as of the first creation, "whole seed is in itself." The grating clash of steel in fixing bayonets told its own story, the color rose in front; the whole line quivered for the start; the edge of the left-wing rippled, swung, tossed among the rocks, straightened, changed curve from cinetara to sickle-shape; and the bristling arches swooped down upon the senried host, down into the face of half a thousand! Two hundred men! It was a great right wheel. Our left swung first, the advancing foe stopped, tried to make a stand amidst trees and boulders, but the frenzied bayonets pressed through every space forced a constant settling to the rear.<sup>23</sup>



John J. Pullens' account of the order and battle as outlined in The Twentieth Maine parallels Colonel Chamberlain's account when he states:

Chamberlain stepped to the colors and his voice rang out. "Bayonet!" There was a moment of hesitation along the line, an intaking of breath like that of a man about to plunge into a cold, dark river. But along with it there was a rattling of bayonet shanks on steel. Intent on his wounded, Lieutenant Melcher sprang out in front of the line with his sword flashing, and this seems to have been the spark. The colors rose in front. A few men got up. Then a few more. They began to shout. The left wing, which was fighting off an attack at the time, suddenly charged, drove off its opponents and kept on until it had swung around abreast of the right wing. Then the regiment plunged down the slope in a great right wheel, Captain A.W. Clark's Company E holding the pivot against the 83rd Pennsylvania. To an officer of the 83rd, the 20th Maine looked as though it were moving "like a great gate upon a post."<sup>24</sup>

The inconsistency of the verbage used in The Killer Angels to give the attack order in relation to what actually transpired is essential to clarify; for this outlines the ferocity of the on going battle as well as the motivation, discipline and training of the 20th Maine Regiment. The word "Bayonet" alone given by Colonel Chamberlain was enough to have the men react to the order, as it spread through the ranks. The men obviously realized the severity of the situation they were now involved in and understood that this was their only chance, as they were outnumbered and almost completely out of ammunition. The word charge was never given, for as Colonel Chamberlain stated, it would not have been heard as well, as the men once they all heard the clash

of steel where already in the offensive mode, beginning to move forward. A major inaccuracy is depicted at this point in The Killer Angels as Shaara advocates Colonel Chamberlain leaping off a rock, yelling charge, implying that he was the catalyst of the attack. There is no evidence to substantiate this point, and Shaara has mixed events from a previous incident into this attack which is totally inaccurate. The only time Colonel Chamberlain ever mounted a rock during the battle was at the onset of the fight as he states:

Suddenly Lieutenant Jones Nichols of "K" Company, a bright officer near our center, ran up to tell me something queer was going on in his front, behind those engaging us. Chamberlain sprang up on a rock in Nichol's company line. He was startled to see thick groups of gray.<sup>25</sup>

This is the only evidence of Colonel Chamberlain mounting a rock and as he stated, he never said charge. Factually after Colonel Chamberlain gave the command "Bayonet," Lieutenant Melcher is the person given credit for leading the middle section of the Regiment forward, as he was assigned to the color company, center of sector, colocated with the regimental commander. Shaara's portrayal of the colonel's actions are false as evidenced by Chamberlains' own words, Lieutenant Melcher's actions as outlined in note twenty-four, and the implication by Chamberlain that the men moved forward on their own after securing their bayonet.<sup>26</sup>

Another subordinate that should be recognized is Captain Ellis Spear commanding "G" company on the far left of the regiment and the last unit of the Union left flank. Ellis was instrumental in pivoting his unit forward and across the front of the 20th Maine Regiment, conducting the right wheel maneuver as desired by Colonel Chamberlain. It was Ellis's initial sweep that began the momentum of the attack and continued it forward as the initial sweep to success.

The final action at the Battle for the Little Round Top that is inaccurate for historical significance and in displaying Colonel Chamberlain's leadership style is Michael Shaara's unfounded conversation between Captain Morrill and Colonel Chamberlain after the battle. In Colonel Chamberlain's words when he chose a unit to be detached from the regiment to guard his flank he said:

I dispatched a stalwart company under the level-headed Captain Morrill in that direction, with orders to move along up the valley to our front and left, between us and the eastern base of the Great Round Top, to keep within supporting distance of us, and to act as the exigencies of the battle should require.<sup>27</sup>

By Colonel Chamberlain's statement, he conveys the point that he had faith in his selection of the skirmish company for the commander was level headed and the unit stalwart. Pullen additionally states about this incident that Chamberlain didn't know quite what these necessities

would be, but he knew Morrill and he was the sort of fellow who would do something and probably do it right.<sup>28</sup>

Michael Shaara in The Killer Angels portrays a totally different atmosphere where Joshua Chamberlain is dissatisfied with Captain Morrill and implies Morrill has a lack of initiative as he says:

I tell you Colonel, I keep thinking I better come back and help you, but you said stay out there and guard that flank so I did, and I guess it come out all right, thank the Lord.<sup>29</sup>

Here Shaara portrays Captain Morrill as being a strict follower of orders to the point of bad judgement. As Colonel Chamberlain and Pullen have depicted, Morrill was picked due to his trustworthiness.

Additionally, Michael Shaara portrays Colonel Chamberlain as rebuking Morrill when he states:

Chamberlain sighed. Captain, he said, next time I tell you to go out a ways, please don't go quite as far.<sup>30</sup>

This statement is totally unjustified to an officer who positioned his unit in a tactically sound location that was able to effectively disrupt the flank and rear of the 15th Alabama Regiment. Captain Morrill chose the opportune time to employ his force as it caused the ultimate routing of the units that were being pushed back by Captain Spears "G" Company as they wheeled right. The words of Colonel Oates of the 15th Alabama clearly express the significance of Captain Morrill's actions:

Oates believed he was completely surrounded and his regiment would have to cut its way out. I had the officers and men advised best I could that when the signal was given that we would not try to retreat in order, but every one should run in the direction from whence he came. We ran like a herd of wild cattle.<sup>31</sup>

From Colonel Oates' words it is obvious that Captain Morrill's surprise attack totally disrupted his men. Colonel Chamberlain outlined that his skirmish company threw on the enemy flank, effective fire that added to the enemy confusion.<sup>32</sup>

All words outside of The Killer Angels verify that Captain Morrill's emplacement of his forces, decision to attack and use of surprise totally caught the enemy forces off guard, adding to a rout of the Confederates forces. All indications were that Colonel Chamberlain was totally satisfied with Morrill's actions contrary to what Michael Shaara presents. Michael Shaara's inaccurate portrayal may be designed to enhance the tenseness of the battle scene by depicting Colonel Chamberlain wondering of the skirmish companies status.

The conclusion of the 2nd day, July 2, 1863 left the seizure of the Big Round Top to be accomplished by the Union forces. Michael Shaara puts little significance on this event. Additionally he depicts a false decision making process to seize the highground. After the Little Round Top was secure, the 20th Maine and the other elements of the 3rd Brigade proceeded to reconsolidate, reorganize and bury the

dead. The commanders met to discuss upcoming operations. As Michael Shaara depicts, Colonel Rice (Brigade Commander, as Vincent was killed) and Joshua Chamberlain meeting they are discussing the seizure of the Big Round Top:

Colonel I have to ask your help. You see the big hill there, the wooded hill? There's nobody there, I think. General Warren wants that hill occupied. Could you do that?<sup>33</sup>

This is inaccurate for General Warren had been wounded early on in the fight for the Little Round Top thus he was not involved with the order to occupy the Big Round Top. His original order only called for the seizure of the Little Round Top.<sup>34</sup> In actuality it was Colonel Rice and Colonel Chamberlain who saw the significant advantage to the seizure of the Big Round Top. They believed the owner of the highground could emplace effective artillery fire from that location, thus they decided to seize the hill. At first Colonel Joseph Fisher was directed to occupy the ground, but he refused for a reason not known. Colonel Rice then directed Colonel Chamberlain to conduct the task.<sup>35</sup>

Though a minor inaccuracy this is significant for it portrays Colonel Chamberlain's keen ability to recognize key terrain and denotes the value his superiors placed on his opinion. Though this event is glossed over by Shaara it was another historical undertaking by the 20th Maine Regiment. The unit led by their Colonel moved up the slopes, bayonets fixed, out of ammunition, partook in a engagement where they

forced the Confederates to withdraw taking two officers and twelve enlisted men prisoners of war. The importance of the terrain was also tactically significant as realized by General Sykes, the 5th Corps commander for he replaced the 3rd Brigade and 20th Maine the next morning with Fisher's rested and fresh Brigade to ensure a full strength unit would be prepared to counter any Confederate attack.

Friday, 3 July 1863, in Michael Shaara's novel outlines events concerning Colonel Chamberlain and his regiment in Chapter One, Three and Six. Generally the events are portrayed accurately as the 3rd Brigade and the 20th Maine are relocated to the left, center rear of the Union main line. They were put in reserve, and exposed to enemy artillery fire throughout the day as Shaara depicts.

The events of chapter three outline Colonel Chamberlain receiving numerous accolades from senior Union officers. An important point that Shaara does emphasize is General Sykes appreciation of the 20th Maine's success. Though the author found no evidence of Colonel Chamberlain being called to General Sykes location for praise as Shaara portrays, his appreciation was noted as Sykes himself "considered the achievement one of the most important of the day."<sup>36</sup>

An important accolade directed to Colonel Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment that Shaara never mentions is

Colonel Adelbert Ames, the Regiment's first colonel as recorded by Corporal William T. Livermore said:

I am very proud of the 20th Regiment and its colonel. I did want to be with you and see your splendid conduct in the field. My heart yearns for you; and more and more, now that these trying scenes convince me of your superiority. The pleasure I felt at the intelligence of your conduct yesterday is some recompense for all that I have suffered. God Bless you and the dear old Regiment.<sup>37</sup>

These laudatory comments summarize the valor of the 20th Maine and their colonel through the words of the man who trained them all for battle.



## ENDNOTES

1. Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 446-447 and 527-528.

Strong Vincent was born in Waterford, Pennsylvania, on June 17, 1837. He was educated at Erie Academy (Pennsylvania), Trinity College (Hartford, Connecticut), and Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1859. He then studied law and was admitted to the bar within a year, commencing practice in Erie. When the Army of the Potomac was reorganized to oppose Robert E. Lee's second invasion of the North, Vincent was assigned to the command of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, V Corps, then under George Sykes. He was mortally wounded at the battle for the Little Round Top at Gettysburg and died July 7, 1863. He was held in high regard among the ranks of the 3rd Brigade, specifically for his bravery under fire.

Daniel Edgar Sickles, always a controversial figure, was born October 20, 1819, in New York City. After attending New York University and studying law, he chose politics. As a Tammany stalwart he became corporation counsel of the city at the age of twenty-eight, but resigned the same year to be secretary of legation in London. He then served as a New York State senator and was a representative in Congress from 1857 to 1861. Sickles first achieved national notoriety in 1859 when he shot down his young wife's lover, son of the author of "The Star Spangled Banner." During a lurid trial, in which the defense counsel was headed by Edwin M. Stanton, Sickles for the first time in American jurisprudence pleaded the "unwritten law" and was acquitted. Subsequently he enraged both critics and admirers by publicly forgiving his spouse. As a War Democrat in 1861, Sickles' offer of his services was eagerly accepted and he was assigned the command of New York's Excelsior Brigade. His later career as division and corps commander, with promotion to the grade of major general to rank from November 29, 1862, found him frequently at odds with his superiors. Nonetheless, he demonstrated many soldierly qualities and was utterly fearless in combat.

At Gettysburg Sickles' men were supposed to cover the Federal left in the vicinity of the Round Tops. Not liking the position he advanced the corps line into the Peach Orchard, creating a salient. The end results were the virtual destruction and subsequent disappearance of the III Corps, the termination of Sickles' command in the field by virtue of a wound which cost him his right leg.

2. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 209.

3. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 108.

4. Ibid., p. 102.

General Meade authorized the release of Buford's cavalry to guard the supply trains going to Westminster under the pretense that another unit would replace them. General Pleasanton failed to accomplish the task and General Butterfield as the Chief of Staff did not follow-up and check, resulting in an exposed flank.

5. Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg, The Second Day (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 142-148.

General Sickles's position had, been visited throughout the day by various members of Meade's staff. No one surfaced an apparent problem until General Warren brought it up at 1500 hours on 2 July 1863. At this point General Meade responded by a personal reconnaissance, however, General Longstreet attacked before the defensive line could be adjusted. General Meade instructed Sickles to fight and he would reinforce the salient that had been formed. General Longstreet's Corps with Hood's Division in lead did not expect Union forces that far forward of Cemetery Ridge. This initially disrupted Longstreet's momentum forcing him to fight earlier than expected. Ultimately, he did defeat the Union 3rd Corps.

6. Ibid., pp. 201-215.

7. Ibid., p. 205.

8. Ibid., pp. 207-208.

9. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 208.

10. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg," Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), p. 899.

11. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 209.

12. Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study in Command (New York: Berne Convention, 1963), p. 391.

13. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg, Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), p. 898.
14. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 210.
15. The War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series I Vol. XXVII Part 1. Report of Gettysburg Jun-Aug 1863, pp. 622-626.
16. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg, Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), p. 899.
17. Ibid., p. 902.
18. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 211.
19. Willard Mosher Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1960), pp. 101-103.
20. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 226.
21. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 124.
22. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 227.
23. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg, Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), pp. 906-907.
24. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War, (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 124.
25. Willard Mosher Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1960), p. 93.
26. Theodore Gerrish, Army Life, A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, ME.: B. Thurston and Company, 1882), p. 110.
27. Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Though Blood and Fire at Gettysburg, Hearst Magazine (New York: 1913), p. 899.
28. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 111.

29. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 229.

30. Ibid.,.

31. John J. Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 126.

32. The War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series I Vol. XXVII Part 1. Report of Gettysburg Jun-Aug 1863, pp. 622-626.

33. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), p. 234.

34. Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg, The Second Day (Chapel Hill, NC. The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 208.

35. Willard Mosher Wallace, Soul of the Lion (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1960), pp. 104-105.

36. Ibid., p. 108.

37. Ibid.,.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The Atlantic Monthly Book Review of April 1975 summarizes the value of Michael Shaara's novel The Killer Angels when it states:

The best way to write about a battle is to tell it as the men who went through it, saw it and felt it and that is what Michael Shaara has done in this stirring, brilliantly interpretive novel."<sup>1</sup>

This statement is the main ingredient for making The Killer Angels a successful work. By presenting history in the novel format, Michael Shaara has described the Battle of Gettysburg differently. He has portrayed history in a manner that makes the reader part of the event, by including conversations and personalities.

Though there are some historical inaccuracies in the novel, they can be viewed as both positive and negative, possibly interjected intentionally in order for the author to solidify various points he is emphasizing. Some inaccuracies actually reinforce various characters' greatness, while others simply are false.

The first event mentioned in the text was the discrepancy in awarding Joshua Chamberlain a sabbatical to study overseas. Michael Shaara depicts Colonel Chamberlain as requesting the leave in order to volunteer for military service. In reality, he was offered the sabbatical by his colleagues to keep him out of the war since they valued his worth as an educator. Though Shaara's depiction could be viewed as ethically questionable, it still reinforces Joshua Chamberlain's unquestionable loyalty to the Northern cause. It also portrays a man of high moral character, who does what's right regardless of outside influence. Chamberlain's personality and leadership style is then developed in the first chapters of the novel.

The integration of the 2nd Maine mutineers into the 20th Maine Regiment is depicted on the wrong date and the circumstances are questionable. By bringing the event into the time-frame the novel covers, Michael Shaara has used the event to show the charismatic leadership abilities of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain. Though the verbiage is inaccurate, and depicts a scenario of enticing rather than directing the mutineers to serve, Michael Shaara still does justice to the colonel's abilities.

All paragraphs involving Joshua Chamberlain's response mentally to General Meade's directives are inaccurate, and do neither justice to General Meade nor Colonel Chamberlain. As outlined in detail in the thesis,

Michael Shaara uses Joshua Chamberlain to discredit General Meade's abilities and directives. After researching General Meade's capabilities and the Union high command strategy in the summer of 1863, General Meade was the most qualified commander to lead the Army of the Potomac. Additionally, though Joshua Chamberlain never personally knew General Meade, he did have professional respect for him as his commander.

The event where the men of the 20th Maine care for the wounded slave may not be historically accurate. However, Michael Shaara uses the event well to depict Colonel Chamberlain's personality and thoughts on the war.

Michael Shaara's depiction of the occupation of the Round Top and its defense surfaced questions. Credit directed toward Colonel Vincent for recognizing the value of the terrain is not totally true. However, the main idea that the Round Top was emphasized for its criticality to the Union defense is accurately portrayed. In the author's opinion, Michael Shaara never mentions General Warren's significance in the occupation for the Round Top because he wants to depict a battle where the Union success was not a result of the generals in charge, but the brigade commanders and below.

The events at the actual fight surface the last of the inconsistencies. Michael Shaara's portrayal of a dismayed Colonel Chamberlain, who is unsure of his orders is

inaccurate, yet it adds to the tenseness of the moment while waiting for the Confederates attack. It also adds to the significance of Colonel Chamberlain's bayonet charge. The scenario Michael Shaara portrays with an "aire of doubt," makes the decision to charge forward with fixed bayonets a crucial event. It is the determined strong commander who must make the decision to charge forward, though all the soldiers realize it's the only option left.

Michael Shaara's final depiction of Joshua Chamberlain leading the bayonet charge is obviously true, but void of additional important factors. Not including the junior commanders by slighting the important contribution of Lieutenant Melcher, assists in glorifying the well deserving colonel, but leaves out a critical fact. Colonel Chamberlain's Regiment was a well trained, disciplined unit, led by a solid officer and non-commissioned officer corps. This reality is never alluded to.

Though there are inaccuracies throughout Michael Shaara's novel, the critical portion of the battle pertaining to the Northern strategic situation is correct. The fight for the Little Round Top was the event that saved the envelopment of the Union line and insured that General Meade's forces remained intact to continue the battle on 3 July 1863. Though The Killer Angels contains inaccuracies regarding events at the Little Round Top, Michael Shaara has ultimately stressed the significance of the terrain. Shaara



also developed the situations and conversations in his book to depict the tenseness of the moments and the urgency of events. Overall the performance of the characters at the Round Top are close enough to fact to deem his portrayal of events as accurate.

The same cannot be said for Michael Shaara's portrayal of personnel. His portrayal of the Northern characters is questionable. He has changed circumstances, events and conversations to fit his depiction. The overall description of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain throughout the novel can ultimately be considered correct. His description of events regarding General Meade, through directives and Chamberlain's thoughts, are inaccurate and a detractor from the novel in the thesis author's opinion.

Despite Michael Shaara's errors of fact, whether intentional or not, the novel The Killer Angels is a truly valuable tool for officer professional development. The use of the book to entice junior officers to begin a reading program, study the Battle of Gettysburg, or to analyze its leadership aspects make this novel a useful and integral part of the Army training program. The future use of The Killer Angels in the Army system, in conjunction with this thesis, will hopefully assist in making leadership training better. This thesis is the only source that has expanded on Shaara's work with the objective of the texts being mutually supportive. It is not designed to validate Shaara's

portrayal of the battle but to supplement the book when used for instruction. The instructor who develops his leadership seminars using this thesis and The Killer Angels, should be able to expand the ideas and thoughts of the students by surfacing additional facts about events. Situations and events portrayed in the novel can also be put into proper perspective using this thesis.

Finally the title chosen by Michael Shaara for his novel is appropriate as it pertains to the officer corps and the probability of the officer being placed in similar circumstances as Joshua Chamberlain. Shaara uses Joshua Chamberlain's conversation with his father to develop the novel's title:

Once Chamberlain had a speech memorized from Shakespeare and gave it proudly, the old man listening but not looking, and Chamberlain remembered it still: "What a piece of work is man ...in action how like an angel!" And the old man, grinning, had scratched his head and then said stiffly, "Well, boy, if he's an angel, he's sure a murderin' angel." And Chamberlain had gone on to school to make an oration on the subject: Man, the Killer Angel. And when the old man heard about it he was very proud, and Chamberlain felt very good remembering it. The old man was proud of his son, the Colonel, of infantry.<sup>2</sup>

Michael Shaara's use of Chamberlain and the title of the novel depict man and his response to war. This is Shaara's way of saying that man is basically good, but for principles and ideals he will fight and die. Joshua Chamberlain was a professor in a state virtually untouched by the war, but out of principle he decided to serve his

country. Chamberlain represents a man with limited military experience who rises to the occasion when placed in a position to save his regiment, army, and his country. Shaara's title reflects the leaders during the time of the Civil War; men who out of principle or circumstances end up killing fellow countrymen; leaders who with one command sent thousands of soldiers into battle to die fighting fellow countrymen over ideals.

Michael Shaara's novel The Killer Angels though partially inaccurate, overall does capture the essence of the Northern perspective of the Battle of Gettysburg through the character of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain. The manner in which Shaara diverges from the truth contributes to the book's uniqueness and value. The inventing of conversations and changing situations results in gaining the reader's interest. Michael Shaara's method of making the personages and events come "alive" is that which makes the description of history so different. Shaara's divergence from the truth through his tremendous creativity keeps the readers attention. Michael Shaara's novel presents history in a way that audiences will actually read it, this is what makes the book useful, as well as great.

Michael Shaara has portrayed Gettysburg in a novel that has brought a generation of military officers to read and study history, as well as leadership. As the New York Times Book Review of October 1974 states, The Killer Angels

will make the reader "condescend to another historical novel."<sup>3</sup> Thus, The Killer Angels has made an important contribution to the Officer Professional Development Program.

The book's value is further enhanced because it conveys to officers the role of leadership on the battlefield. Michael Shaara's selection of Colonel Chamberlain as a character in his novel depicts a role model for today's officer corps. Joshua Chamberlain represents the citizen soldier, the foundation of this countries' armed forces. He exemplifies the educated officer who combined common sense with a sincere compassion and care for his men. He was an officer who possessed ethics and morals and the determination to do what was right. Finally, Joshua Chamberlain was extraordinarily brave under fire. He led from the front and his soldiers unquestionably followed him. His example is one for the officer corps to emulate.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Atlantic Monthly. (April 1975), vol 235, p. 98.
2. Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels (New York: Ballentine Books, 1974), p. 119.
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